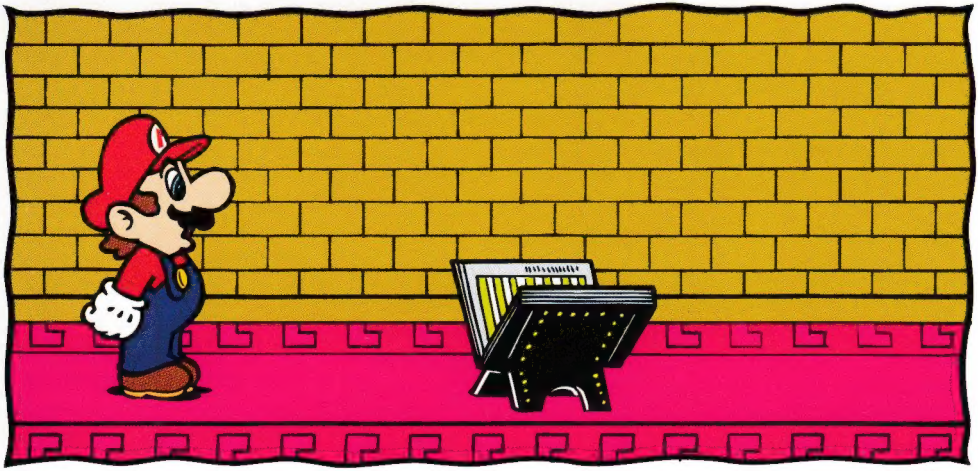
Who was Mohammed?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. An Egyptian archaeologist
2. An African doctor
3. An Arabian prophet



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Mohammed

In the 7th century A.D., the prophet Mohammed founded Islam, one of the major religions of the world. He taught the Arabs to worship one true God, known in Arabic as Allah.

3 Mohammed was an Arabian prophet.

Photo © V.I.P./ Sipas Iconо

The holy book of Islam, the Koran, relates the divine message as revealed to Mohammed by God. Also listed in the holy book are the rules and laws by which each Muslim must live.

Mohammed was born in 570 in the city of Mecca, in Saudi Arabia. Orphaned early in life, Mohammed was very poor.

Meditation and Messages

One day, as 40-year-old Mohammed was meditating, he received a vision of the archangel Gabriel, who sent him out to preach the message of one God to the Arabs. In later visions, Mohammed was chosen by Allah (God) to speak in His name to oppose rich, pagan citizens of Mecca.

Mecca, Then and Now

The people of Mecca didn't believe Mohammed and they exiled him from his home town. Nearby, in Medina, Mohammed became a religious leader and returned to Mecca to organize the new religion of Islam. Today, more than 600 million people follow the teachings of Mohammed, as written in the sacred Koran. Followers of Islam turn toward Mecca to pray to Allah three times each day.

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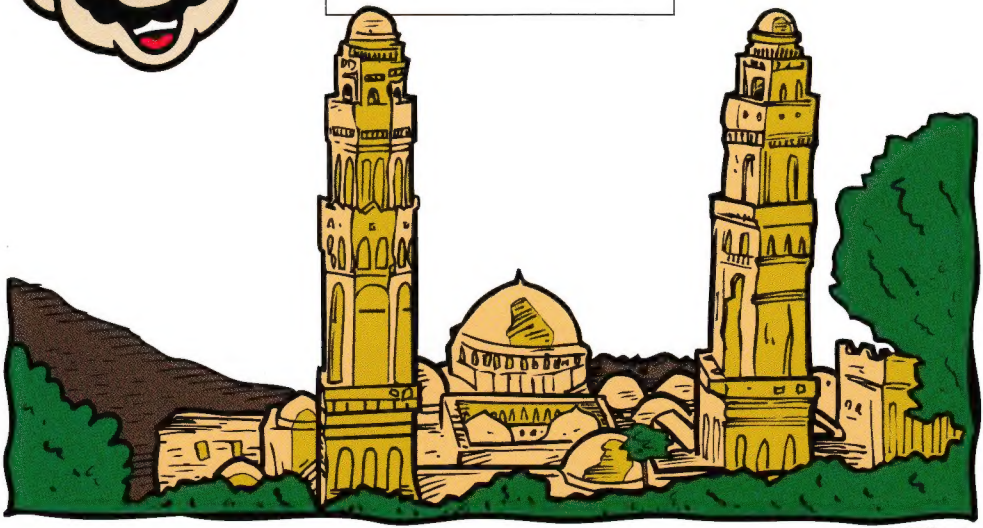
What is the Moslem place of worship called?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1 A synagogue

2 A mosque

3 A temple



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Mosque

In Arabic, the word mosque means "the place of prostration." For Moslems, it is the place of worship, where believers kneel to pay respect and reverence to Allah.

2 The Moslem place of worship is called a mosque.

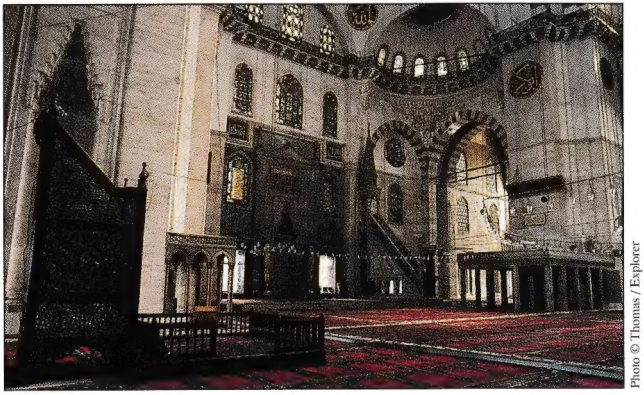

Photo © Thomas / Explorer

The interior of the Mosque of Suleiman in Turkey.

A mosque is always open for meditation, study, and other activities of the Moslem community. The house of the prophet and the founder of Islam, Mohammed, set the standard for all mosques.

A Simple Plan

A mosque has one or more towers or minarets from which the faithful are called to pray three times a day. There's a courtyard with a fountain or well for ceremonial washing—Moslems must wash their hands, feet, and faces to purify themselves before praying. Off the courtyard is the prayer room. It has a niche or mihrah indicating the direction to Mecca—when Moslems pray, they face in the direction of Mecca, the home of Mohammed. The only furniture in the prayer room is a mimbar or pulpit, used by the imam who supervises the prayer service. You won't find statues or religious pictures in a mosque for they are forbidden.

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Who is the leader of Tibet's Buddhists?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. The Dalai Lama
2. The pope
3. The Archbishop of Canterbury

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Dalai Lama

For centuries a Dalai Lama ruled Tibet and was leader of the country's Buddhists. But in 1959, the invading Chinese forced the current Dalai Lama to leave. Now living in India, he is still the leader of Tibet's Buddhists.

1 The Dalai Lama is the leader of Tibet's Buddhists.

Photo © Aepli/Explorer

Potala Palace towers over the Tibetan village of Lhassa.

Dalai Lama is the title given to the head of Tibet's Buddhists. Before his exile, he lived in the Potala Palace overlooking Lhassa, a city high in the Himalayas. Followers worshiped at the statue of Buddha in the palace's temple. Built in the 7th century, the palace-fort has more than 1,000 rooms, 10,000 pillars, and 200,000 statues! At the top of the palace are the tombs of former Dalai Lamas.

Power Passed On

The Dalai Lama is considered a sacred person. If he dies, his spirit is passed on to a child who shows from birth some sign of supernatural origin. That child is then named the new Dalai Lama. The present Dalai Lama, the fourteenth reincarnation of the spirit, was chosen at the age of four.

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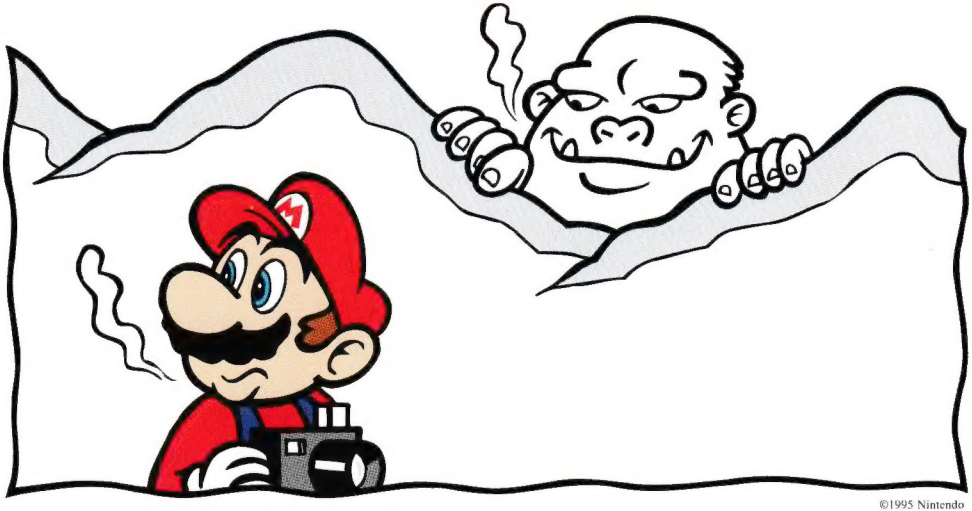
By what other name do we call the Abominable Snowman

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1 Milo
2 Yeti
3 Kong



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Yeti

No one's ever taken a close-up photo of the Yeti. But people around the world are fascinated by the idea of a part-ape, part-man wandering the snowy heights of Asia's Himalayan mountains.

2 **The other name given to the Abominable Snowman is the Yeti.**

Photo © Y. Taburiès

With its snowy-white fur blending into the snow-covered Himalayas, you can understand why the Yeti is also called the Abominable Snowman.

Some people swear they've seen the Yeti. They say it's a huge humanlike creature that could be an animal...or the sole survivor of an extinct species.

Tradition in Tibet

First sighted in the late 1890s, stories of a beast with large apelike body and humanlike face quickly became part of the folklore of Tibet. According to legend, the Yeti is a hairy monster that walks upright on thick legs, has long arms that reach to its knees and eats humans or yaks. When it runs away across the snowy slopes, they say, the Yeti's thick white hair folds over its face, making it almost invisible. In 1951, a scientist took photos of huge tracks he believed were made by a half-man half-ape creature. Others say they were just bear tracks that melted into larger footprints. Who really knows? The yeti...and he's not talking!

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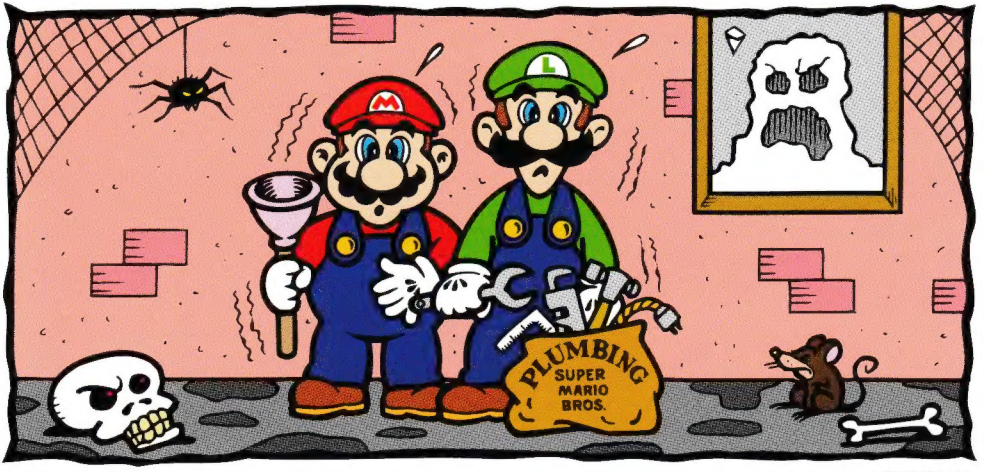
D3 491 07-05

Did Dracula really exist?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Yes, he was a 15th-century Romanian prince.
2. Yes, he was a frightening vampire.
3. No, he was just a film character.



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Dracula

Vlad III was the Romanian prince of Walachia, a region south of Transylvania. His last name was Dracula, Romanian for "Son of the Devil." Dracula was a bloodthirsty warrior…but not a vampire.

1 Dracula was a 15th-century Romanian prince.

Photo © Sipa-Press

Bela Lugosi played the evil, bloodthirsty vampire Count Dracula in a 1931 version of Bram Stoker's novel.

Dracula was thought to be a brave warrior when fighting the neighboring Turks and Hungarians. But when he joined the Crusades, in service to the pope, Dracula turned into a torturer who looted villages and slaughtered innocent people.

Prince of Vampires

Dracula quickly became a legend. Because of the hundreds of savage murders he committed, it was rumored that he was a vampire—a corpse who slept by day in his coffin and returned to life at night to suck the blood from innocent people. Centuries later, in 1897, novelist Bram Stoker based a book on the wicked prince. *Dracula* was about an evil Transylvanian nobleman who was a vampire. The book was first made into a movie in 1922. There have been many other films of the Dracula legend, including two during 1994.

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Who builds religious monuments known as chortens?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Catholics
2. Buddhists
3. Protestants

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Chortens

In Tibet, monuments to distinguished Buddhists, especially spiritual leaders, are called chortens.

2 **Members of the Buddhist religion build monuments known as chortens.**

Photo © Weisbecker / Explorer

You'll find many chortens like this built on hillsides and along roads between the mountains of Tibet.

Chortens are symbols of the Buddhist culture and of Buddha himself, who was born in Nepal about 563 BC. He taught that through meditation and simple living, people could reach nirvana—perfect enlightenment.

Celebrates Creation

Constructed on a square terrace representing Earth, one part of the chorten is formed like a bell, representing water. It supports a stand, representing fire, from which springs a slender 13-tiered spire, representing air. Each tier stands for an ascending state of knowledge that leads to nirvana. Above this rises a moon and sun, representing the Buddhist heaven or nirvana. The dome, or stupa, usually has a small chamber in which holy relics of Buddha are stored. A chorten is often built above the tomb of a beloved Buddhist teacher or saint. It's believed to protect the dead from demons. The small prayer flags carry petitions from those who place them there to their god. To Buddhists, a visit to a chorten is believed a pious act.

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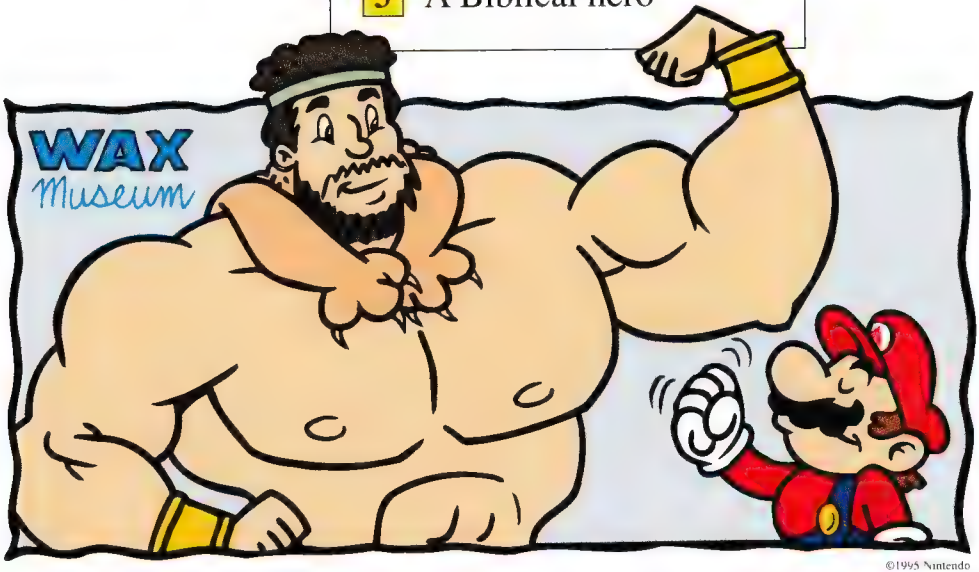
Who was Hercules?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. A hero of Greek myths
2. A Roman wrestler
3. A Biblical hero



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Hercules

Hercules, a great hero of Greek mythology, was the son of Zeus, king of the gods, and a mortal princess. He was known for his tremendous physical strength.

1 Hercules was a hero in Greek mythology.

Photo © L. Y. Lorat / Explorer

This Roman mosaic in Morocco illustrates the 12 labors of Hercules.

Hera, wife of Zeus, hated Hercules and tried to destroy him. The goddess made Hercules suffer a fit of madness, during which he killed his wife and children. To pay for his crime, he was commanded to perform 12 labors.

The Labors of Hercules

Hercules killed a fierce lion and slew the deadly Hydra—a monster with nine serpent heads. He captured a huge boar and a golden-horned stag, drove away a flock of vicious birds, and cleaned the king's stables by making two rivers flow through them. Then, Hercules captured the bull of King Minos and the horses of King Diomedes, and defeated the queen of the Amazons. He captured the cattle of the monster Geryon, stole the Golden Apples from the Tree of Life, and descended into the world of the dead to capture the three-headed watchdog, Cerberus. Years later, when Hercules died, he was taken to Olympus, home of the gods, where he became one of them.

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Which book is considered sacred to both Jews and Christians?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. The Koran
2. The New Testament
3. The Old Testament

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The Old Testament

The Bible has two parts. The Old Testament, begins with the creation of the world, and is considered by Jews and Christians to be sacred. The New Testament, begins with the birth of Jesus, and is considered sacred by Christians only.

3 The Old Testament of the Bible is considered sacred by both Jews and Christians.

Photo © E.Bernager / Explorer

There have been many translations of the Bible but scholars from many religious groups, including these Orthodox Jews, still work to interpret the exact meaning of the words.

The books of the Old Testament detail how God created the world and everything in it. They begin with the story of Adam and Eve, whom God sent into the world to multiply. They also contain the stories of Noah and the ark, Jacob and Esau, and Joseph and his coat of many colors. And they tell the story of Moses, who led the children of Israel out of Egypt to the promised land.

The New Testament

The books of the New Testament give the history of Jesus, a Jew born in Bethlehem. Christians believe Jesus is the Son of God and the Messiah promised by the prophets of the Old Testament. In the Bible, Jesus' message of love and humility is told through the words of his Apostles.

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Who was the Roman god of war?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1 Hercules

2 Mars

3 Thor

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Mars

Mars was not only the Roman god of war, he was also the god of farming. March, the month in which the growing season begins, was named for him. There are many legends about Mars, whose name also gave us the word martial, meaning warlike or military.

2 Mars was the roman god of war.

© J. M. Steinlein / Explorer

A statue in Italy depicts the legend of Romulus and Remus, supposedly nursed by a wolf. The legend also credits the twins with founding Rome.

According to legend, Mars was the father of twin sons, Romulus and Remus. Their human mother was Rhea Silvia. Her jealous relatives tried to drown the two babies in the Tiber River. The legend states that Mars sent a she-wolf to find and nurse the twins until they could be found and adopted by humans. After the she-wolf fed Romulus and Remus, a shepherd named Faustulas raised them to manhood.

Founding Fathers

Legends also say that in 753 B.C., the twins founded the city of Rome. After a long rivalry, Remus was killed by his brother Romulus, who then became the first king of Rome.

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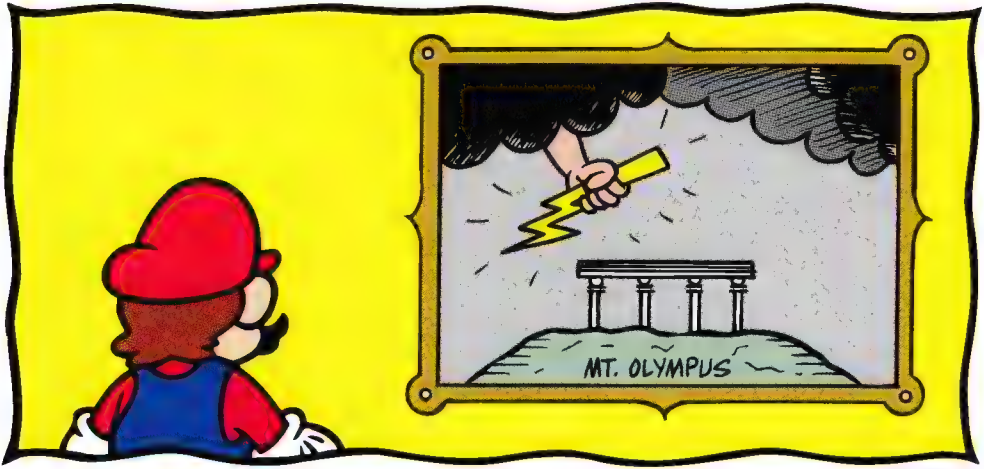
Who was the leader of the Greek gods?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1 Polonius
2 Homer
3 Zeus



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Zeus

The ancient Greeks explained the creation of the world through myths and legends. They believed that through the union of the god of heaven and goddess of earth were born the Titans, Cyclopes, and Monsters. From the Titans came the leader of all the gods—Zeus.

3 Zeus was the leader of the Greek gods.

© North Wind Picture Archives

In art, Zeus is usually depicted as a bearded and majestic figure. The eagle and oak tree are symbols of Zeus, god of earth and sky.

Greek myths state that the youngest Titan, Cronos, dethroned his father to become king of the gods. To assure that his own children could never do that to him, Cronos ate them…all but the youngest, Zeus, who was saved by his mother.

Revenge and Reward

On Mount Olympus, Zeus headed a family of 12 gods and goddesses known as the Olympians. Each god and goddess governed a particular realm, like Poseidon the god of the sea and Athena goddess of wisdom. Zeus led the Olympians in overthrowing Cronos and the other Titans. Then Zeus became the supreme god of the earth and sky, threatening mortals with rain and thunderbolts. The Greeks believed Zeus was their all-seeing, all-knowing father-figure and protector.

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Who was Buddha?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. The King of India
2. The Greek god of good harvest
3. The founder of one of the world's major religions

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Buddha (563-483 BC)

Buddha is Sanskrit for "Enlightened One." The founder of Buddhism, Siddhartha Gautama, was the son of a wealthy Hindu prince. He gave up his riches to teach The Four Noble Truths; the foundation of Buddhist beliefs.

3 Buddha was the founder of one of the world's major religions, Buddhism.

© J. L. Nou / Explorer

Statue of a meditating Buddha. One of the world's major religions, more than 300 million people are Buddhists.

Siddhartha was born in Nepal in 563 B.C. Upset by the illness, suffering, and death he saw, he meditated on their causes. He concluded that human suffering is caused by a desire for worldly things, and by eliminating that desire, one can eliminate suffering. So Siddhartha became a wandering monk, living a life of poverty and sharing his teachings with others. Some say he was called Buddha because he reached a state of enlightenment while meditating under a Bodhi tree.

A Role Model

Today, Buddhist monks have few possessions and beg for food as Buddha did. They believe that if they live as Buddha did they'll achieve enlightenment and peace, a state that they call nirvana.

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What is "Carnival?"

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. A type of airplane
2. A Christian pre-Easter celebration
3. Another name for the clownfish

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Carnival

The word Carnival comes from a Latin word meaning "without meat." For centuries, Christians didn't eat meat during Lent, a solemn time before Easter. But for days before Lent, everyone had a good time.

2 Carnival is a Christian pre-Easter celebration.

© Boutin / Explorer

People parade in the streets of New Orleans and other cities to celebrate Mardi Gras, an important part of Carnival time.

Lent, a period of 40 days of prayer and fasting, is observed by Christians to prepare for Easter. The date on which Lent begins is different each year, but it's usually in February or March. For a week before Ash Wednesday, the day Lent begins, cities in Europe, South America, and the United States host Carnivals.

Mardi Gras

The biggest Carnival celebration is the day before Ash Wednesday, called Mardi Gras or "fat Tuesday." For the celebration, people dress in costumes, take to the streets for a parade, dance at masked balls, and just have fun. The next morning, Ash Wednesday, people retreat into the quiet life until Lent ends and Easter begins.

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Which mythical Greek hero built wings and flew?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1 Icarus

2 Hercules

3 Adonis

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Icarus

In Greek mythology, Icarus was a hero who wore feathered wings sealed with wax. He used the wings to fly to freedom from the labyrinth of the Minotaur.

1 Icarus was a mythical Greek hero who built wings and flew.

© J. L. Charmet / Explorer

When Icarus flew too close to the sun, its rays melted the wax that held his wings together.

Icarus was the son of Daedalus, the man who built the labyrinth, or maze, in which King Minos imprisoned the Minotaur, a monster with a bull's head and man's body. When Daedalus helped the hero Theseus find his way out of the labyrinth after killing the Minotaur, King Minos was so angry he imprisoned Daedalus and his son Icarus in the labyrinth.

Flight to Freedom

Hoping to escape, Daedalus constructed wings made of feathers and wax and put them on Icarus's shoulders. Before Icarus flew to safety, his father warned him not to fly too near the sun. But Icarus didn't listen. He flew so close to the sun that the wax melted and he plunged to his death in the sea. Legend says the area where Icarus fell is off the coast of Asia Minor. Today it's called the Icarian Sea.

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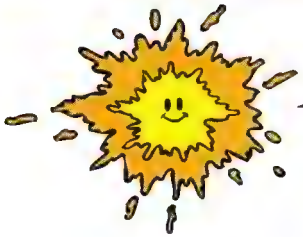
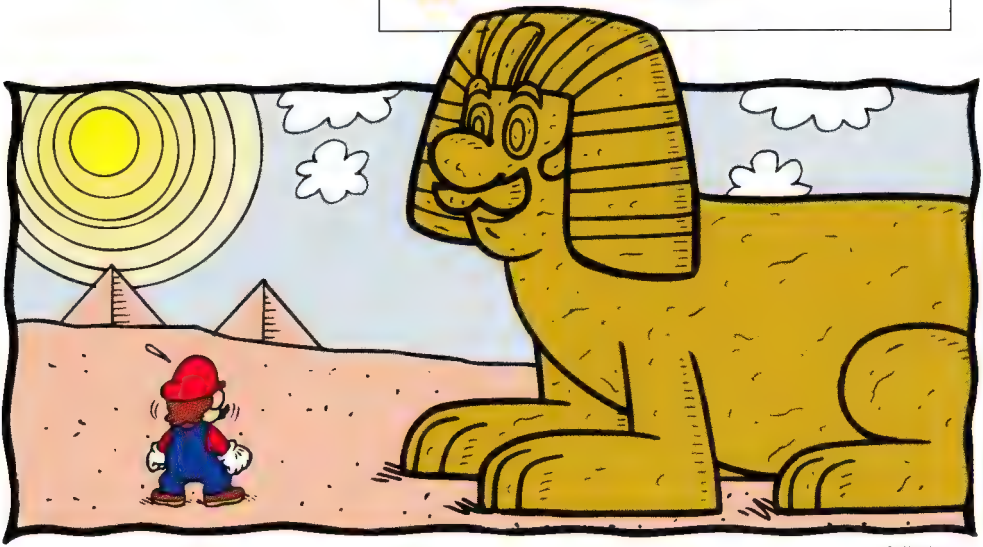
What is a sphinx?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS



1. The reincarnation of Buddha
2. Chief cat of the Roman gods
3. A mythical Egyptian monster



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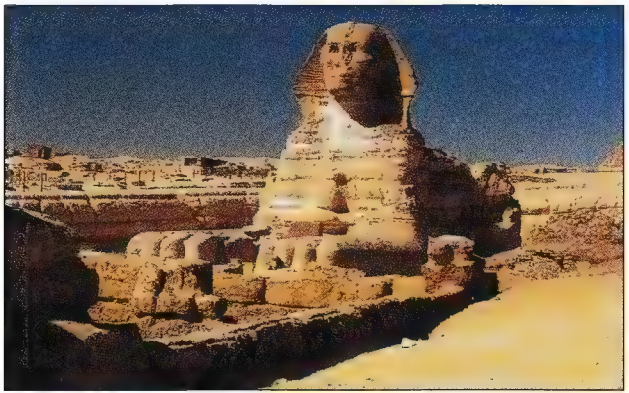
Sphinx

A sphinx had the body of a lion and the head of a human, ram, or hawk. In ancient Egypt, the sphinx was used as a symbol of the pharaoh.

3 A sphinx is a mythical monster of ancient Egypt.



© C Erath / Explorer

The most famous sphinx is the Great Sphinx at Giza.

The oldest and largest sphinx is the Great Sphinx at Giza in Egypt. Called "Father of Terror," this crouching lion with the head of the pharaoh Khafre was built about 2600 B.C. It's 240 feet (73 m) long and 66 feet (20 m) high. The head and body were carved from one block of limestone. The paws and legs were cut from stone blocks.

The Riddler

According to legend, a sphinx guarded the door to the Greek city of Thebes and devoured anyone who couldn't answer its riddle: What walks on four legs in the morning, two at noon, and three at night? When asked, the Greek hero Oedipus replied, "Man, who crawls on all fours as a baby, then walks on two legs, and finds need for a cane in old age." The furious monster dived into the sea and died. Oedipus was proclaimed king of Thebes.

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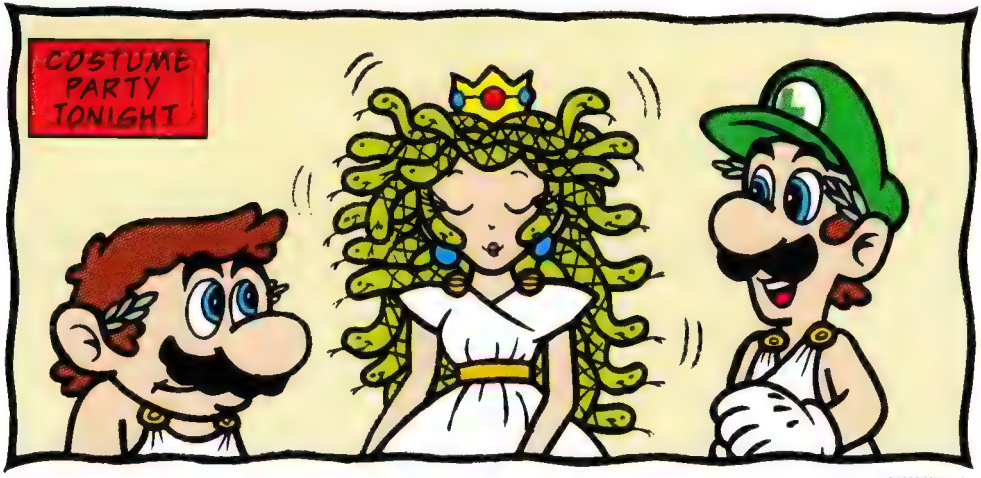
Who was Medusa?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Madonna's mother
2. A Russian princess
3. A Gorgon in a Greek myth



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Medusa

Medusa was one of three Gorgons. She and her two sisters had wiggling snakes for hair, repulsive grins, and sharp claws. The myth says Medusa was so ugly, if people looked at her, they turned to stone.

3 Medusa, according to a Greek myth, was a woman transformed into a Gorgon.

© DR

Athena kept the head of Medusa and put it on a shield so that her enemies would see it and be turned to stone.

According to the myth, Medusa had once been beautiful and vain. She boasted of her beauty to Athena, the goddess of wisdom, who became jealous and turned Medusa into a hideous creature.

Medusa Dies

When the mythical hero Perseus set out to kill Medusa, he knew he'd turn to stone if he looked directly at her face. Instead, he looked into his mirrorlike shield as he cut off Medusa's head. According to myth, the winged horse Pegasus was born from Medusa's headless body and poisonous snakes rose up from her blood. Athena kept the blood and gave it to the god of healing. Blood from Medusa's left side was fatal poison, but blood from her right side had the power to bring people back to life.

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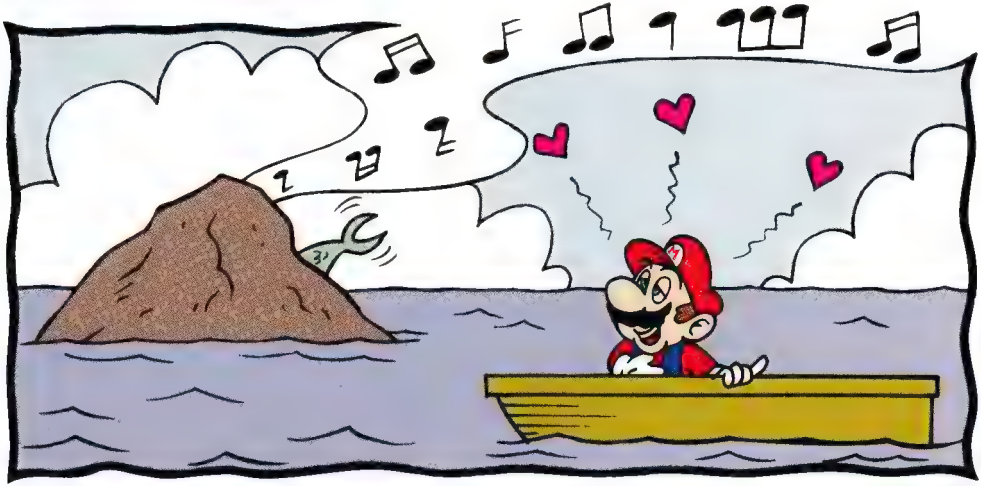
What is a mermaid?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. A creature from mythology
2. A Biblical character
3. A mollusk



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Mermaids

In myths, mermaids were half woman and half fish who sat by the sea combing their long golden hair. Similar folk tales of a mermaid falling head-over-tail in love with a human are found all over the world, especially in seafaring countries.

1 **A mermaid, a creature from mythology, was half woman and half fish.**

© Potter / Spa Press

To honor writer Hans Christian Andersen, author of "The Little Mermaid," a statue of the mermaid welcomes visitors to Copenhagen, Denmark.

Legend tells that a mermaid would slip a magic cap on the head of her true love. Then she'd take him to her undersea home and while wearing the cap, the human could breathe underwater. Mythical mermen also captured mortal maidens. Some folk tales have mermaids coming ashore to live. The most famous, "The Little Mermaid," written by Denmark's Hans Christian Andersen, was based on local folk tales he heard as a child. Andersen's story has had many retellings, including the Disney animated feature of 1990 by the same name.

Real Sea Creatures?

Some people say the dolphin and manatee, or sea cow, look somewhat human from a distance. This may explain the mermaid myth.

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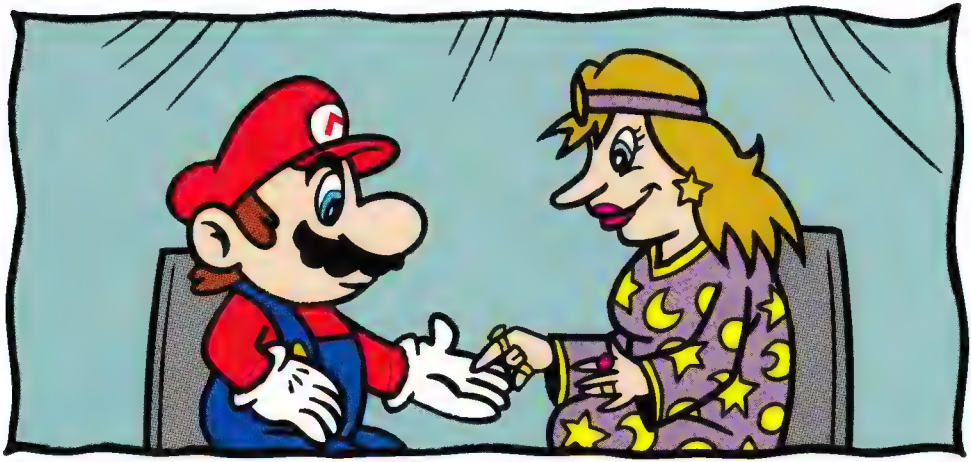
Who tells fortunes by "reading" hands?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Phrenologist
2. Palmist
3. Osteopath



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Palmistry

Palmists believe they can foretell the future by examining your hand. Special lines and areas supposedly indicate your personality.

2 A palmist tells fortunes by reading the lines in a person's hand.

© Superstock

Most palmists study your face and your body language as well as your hands for clues to your personality.

The ancient art of chiromancy, or palmistry, originated in Asia. Once thought to be a science, today most people consider palmistry an amusement. It's still practiced in many parts of the world.

Reading Hands

The fleshy parts at the base of each finger and on the side of your hand, called mounts, are named for Apollo, the moon, Venus, Jupiter, Saturn, Mercury, and Mars. A prominent mount is said to indicate certain characteristics, such as wealth, ambition and pride; passion and creativity. Each wrinkle or line in your hand has a name and meaning too. For example: a long life line—you'll live long; a deep heart line—you're affectionate; a strong head line—you're intelligent and imaginative. Palmists also use clues in your behavior to make predictions. If you're nervous, you reveal your feelings, and if you bite your nails, that's a clue too!

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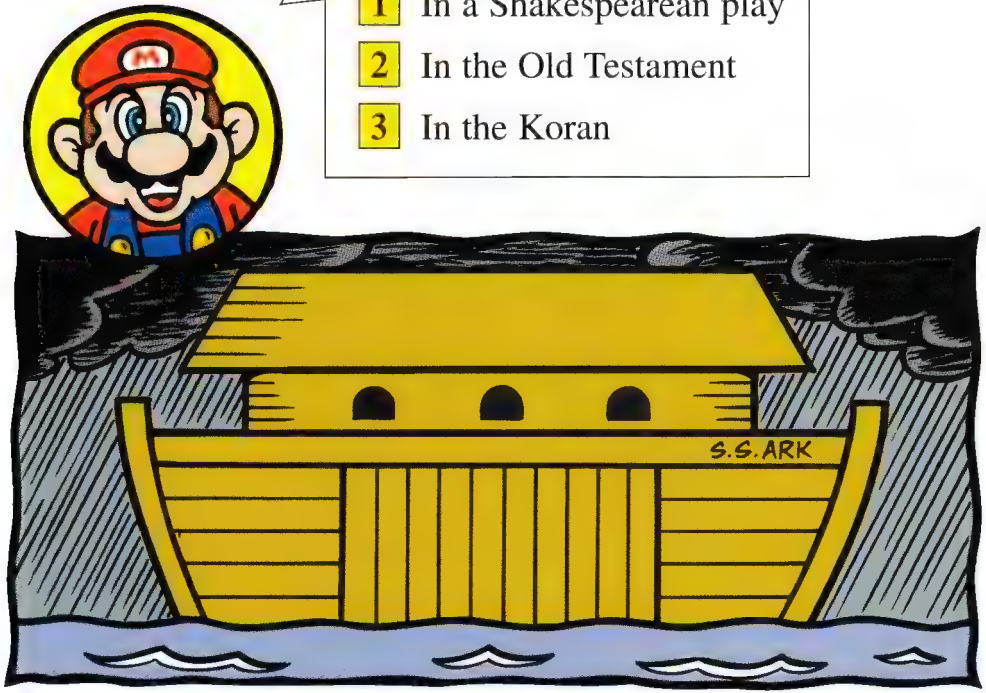
Where would you find the story of Noah and the Ark?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. In a Shakespearean play
2. In the Old Testament
3. In the Koran



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Noah and the Ark

According to the Old Testament of the Bible, God told Noah He would flood the world, but if Noah followed God's instructions, he and his family would be saved.

2 The story of Noah and the Ark is in the Old Testament of the Bible.

© 1994 North Wind Pictures

The Bible tells that after the flood, Noah lived for 350 years, reaching the age of 950.

The Old Testament begins with the story of creation, and includes the tale of Noah and the ark. For 120 years, Noah warned people that God would send a flood to destroy the world if they didn't change their evil ways. No one listened. Meanwhile, Noah built an ark according to God's instructions and gathered birds and animals two-by-two to repopulate the world. Then Noah and his family boarded the ark just before God sent rain for 40 days and 40 nights.

Peace Sign

After 150 days, the waters dropped and the ark rested on a mountain top. Noah sent out a dove, which returned with an olive branch in its mouth—a sign that the land was dry enough for the survivors to come out and start new lives. God placed a rainbow in the sky as a sign He would never flood the whole world again.

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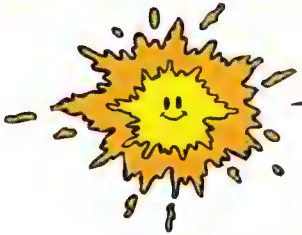
What is the major religion of India?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS



1 Buddhism
2 Hinduism
3 Islam

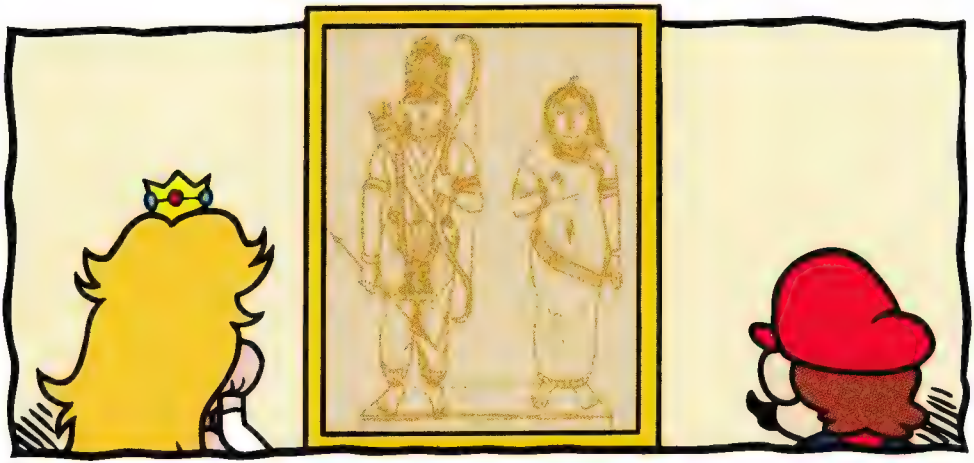


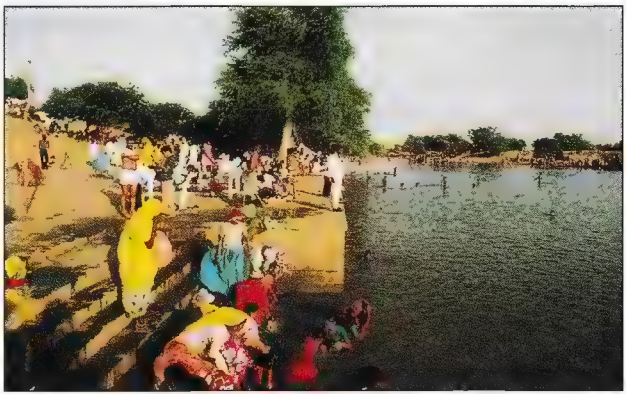
Illustration Gary Fields

©1995 Nintendo

Hinduism

The basic texts of Hinduism are the Vedas which include prayers and hymns, rituals, philosophy and descriptions of Hindu gods. Hindus are polytheistic, they worship many gods.

2 Though many Indians are Buddhists or Muslims, Hinduism is the dominant religion in India.



© Frilet / Spa Image

The Ganges River in India is considered sacred by Hindus. Many Hindu temples are built on the banks of the Ganges.

Hinduism is the basis for India's social class system, known as the caste system. Hindus believe people are born into a particular caste or social rank. At the top are the Brahmans—priests and scholars. At the bottom are the untouchables, people who do the work no one else wants to do. Untouchables have suffered from discrimination and prejudice for centuries. It wasn't until 1950 that untouchables were granted full citizenship in India. There are hundreds of castes in between, such as merchants, soldiers and laborers.

Reincarnation

Hindus believe that when people die their souls are reborn in different bodies. A person might even come back as a plant or a household pet. People who are honest and devout are thought to come back as members of a higher caste. Those who are wicked might return as bugs or poisonous plants.

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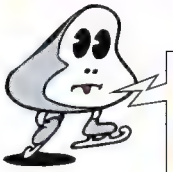
What is superstition?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS



1. Another word for calligraphy
2. The art of decorating the ceilings of churches
3. Belief in charms and invisible forces controlling fate

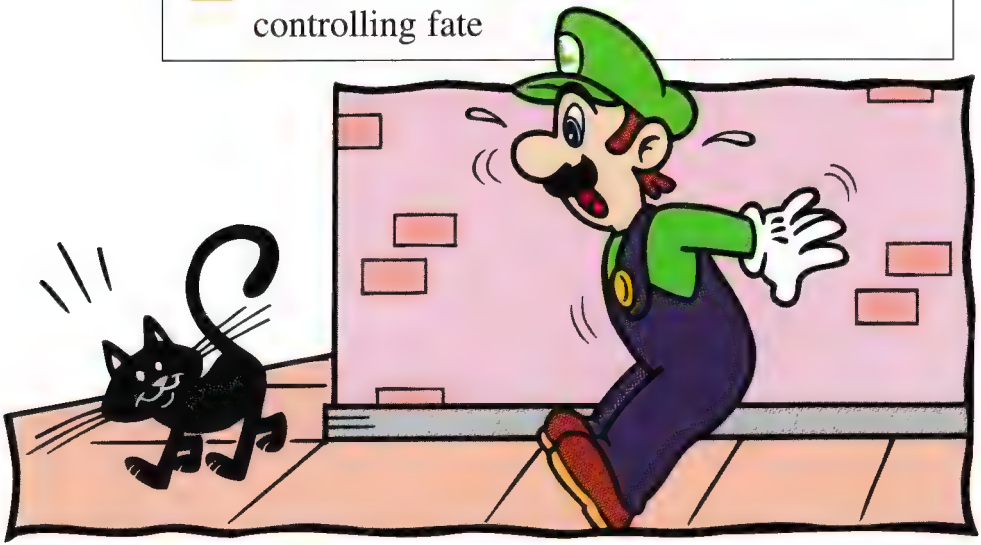


Illustration: Gary Fields

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Superstition

Do you carry a rabbit's foot for good luck, knock on wood, or walk on the sidewalk without stepping on the cracks? If so, you're showing your belief in superstition.

3 Superstition is the belief that magic charms and certain practices bring good or bad luck.

© G. Lacz / Sunset

Creatures of the night, like owls and bats, are the focus of many superstitions. Some originated in pagan cultures, others can be traced to the Bible.

Most superstitions have existed since ancient times. Many come from pagan cultures which believed in nature spirits and magic. Knocking on wood, for example, is believed to be a pagan custom. When people shared good news they knocked on a tree to distract the evil spirits living inside it. The knocking kept the spirits from hearing about their good fortune and causing harm out of spite. Pagans also believed that certain rocks and plants could heal or protect them from evil.

Triscadekaphobia

The number 13 is considered unlucky by many people. It's believed that this superstition has its roots in the New Testament of the Bible. Jesus and his twelve disciples attended the Last Supper—a total of 13 guests, one of whom was Judas, who later betrayed Jesus. Even today it's rare for a host to seat 13 people at a table for dinner. Fear of the number 13 is called triscadekaphobia.

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Who was Paul Bunyan?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. A pitcher for the N.Y. Mets
2. U.S. Secretary of State
3. A fictional lumberjack

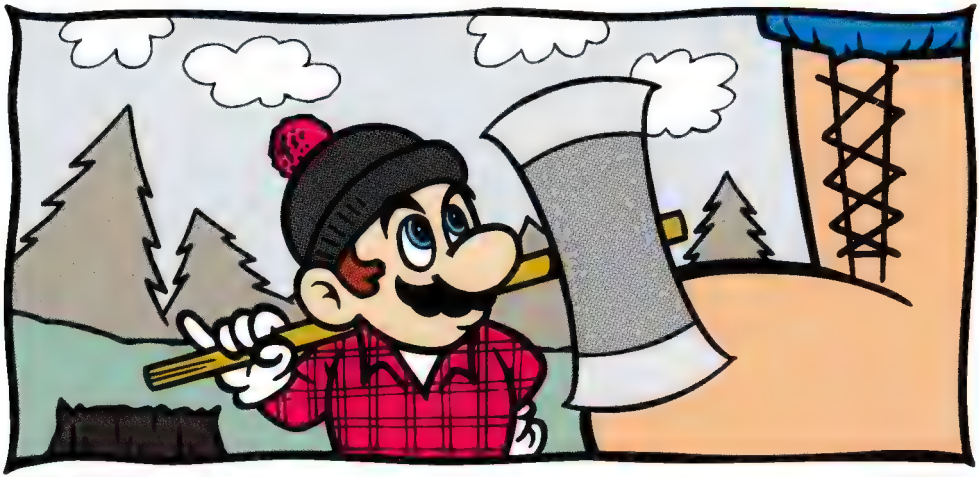

Illustration Gary Fields

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Paul Bunyan

The legend of Paul Bunyan ranks among the best American tall tales. A tall tale is an exaggerated story.

3 Paul Bunyan was a fictional giant lumberjack.

© Karen Yarosh

Babe the blue ox was Paul's constant companion as he felled trees and created landforms across America.

Paul Bunyan was said to be a giant lumberjack with superhuman strength. According to the legend, Paul scooped out the Great Lakes to provide drinking water for Babe, his giant blue ox. She was so big, they say, that when she needed new shoes, Big Ole the blacksmith had to open another iron mine in Minnesota! Babe could haul a whole forest of trees at one time, and it was because of trees that Paul dug Washington's Puget Sound: he needed to float huge logs to a lumber mill.

Birth of a Legend

Like most legends, no one knows for sure where the tale of Paul Bunyan began. Some folklore historians think it developed from old French giant tales that French-Canadian lumberjacks told. In 1910, the legend was retold in a Detroit, Michigan newspaper. Since then, the story of Paul Bunyan has inspired books, ballets, operas, and movies. A statue of Paul Bunyan is located in Bemidji, Minnesota.

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What is Christmas?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1 The celebration of Christ's birthday

2 The celebration of the Pope's birthday

3 The celebration of Magellan's voyage

Illustration: Gary Fields

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Christmas

Christmas is a Christian holy day that celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ. It's celebrated on December 25th.

1 Christmas is the celebration of Christ's birthday.

© R.J. Pratz / Kid / Heat Qui

The Magi brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

No one knows for sure the exact date of Christ's birth, but Christians celebrate it on the same day every year. The first recorded mention of a celebration of Christ's birth was on a Roman calendar dated 336 A.D. It was marked to indicate that December 25 was the day of observance. It's a very sacred day to Christians, most of whom go to church and participate in special religious services.

Bible Stories

The Gospels of Saint Luke and Saint Matthew, in the New Testament of the Bible, gave us the story of Christmas. Luke tells how an angel reported Jesus' birth to shepherds outside the town of Bethlehem. Matthew tells how three wise men, known as the Magi, followed a bright star to where Jesus lay in a manger. On Christmas, most Christians exchange gifts with family members in remembrance of the gifts the Magi brought to Jesus.

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What is a unicorn?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. A one-wheeled bicycle
2. A type of computer
3. A mythical animal

Illustration: Gary Fields

©1995 Nintendo

Unicorn

A unicorn is a mythical animal that has the head and body of a horse, the legs of a deer, and the tail of a lion. And in the middle of the unicorn's forehead is a single horn.

3 A unicorn is a mythical animal.

© Karen Yarosh

One legend tells that the unicorn became extinct when it was tossed from the Ark and drowned.

The unicorn is usually shown as a white animal and it's believed that the animal symbolizes purity, innocence, and modesty. Some see it as a symbol for Christ, with the horn symbolizing the crown of thorns. Once people thought that a unicorn's horn contained an antidote for poison. During the Middle Ages, people made and sold powders that were supposedly made from ground unicorn horn.

Worldwide Wonder

Many scientists believe that the likeness of the unicorn was a composite gathered by second-hand stories from people who had actually seen a rhinoceros. Accounts of unicorns are found in the legends and art of China, India, the Middle East, and medieval Europe.

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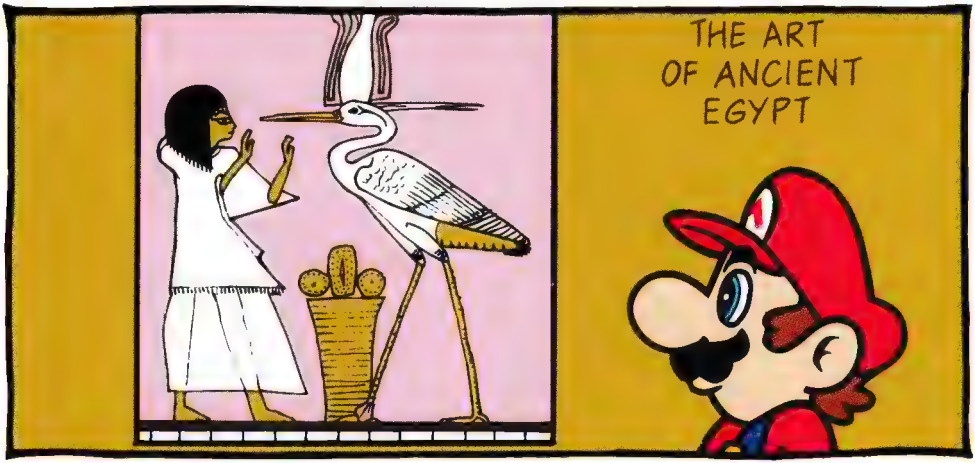
D3 054 27-13

What is the phoenix?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. A mythical bird
2. A mythical giant
3. A mythical dragon



Illustration, Gary Fields

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Phoenix

The phoenix was a mythical Egyptian bird. According to legends, the old bird burned to death and a new one rose from the ashes.

1 The phoenix is a mythical bird.

© Karen Yarosh

In Egyptian mythology the phoenix represents rebirth.

Only one phoenix lived at a time, and it was always a male. The eagle-sized phoenix had dazzling golden and reddish-purple feathers. Some say it lived exactly 500 years; others say it lived as long as 97,200 years. No matter how long it lived, at the end of its life, it burned itself on a funeral pyre. From the ashes, another phoenix rose, young and refreshed. The young phoenix took its father's remains to the Egyptian city of Heliopolis—City of the Sun—and laid them on the altar of the sun god.

China's Phoenix

Chinese mythology also includes a story of a phoenix called feng-huang. Since the Chinese word for wind is feng, some people believe the phoenix was the wind god. It could be either male or female, and was the symbol of the Chinese Empress. Some Chinese wedding gowns are decorated with a phoenix, indicating that the bride is "empress" for a day.

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Who worshipped the feathered serpent god, Quetzalcoatl?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1 The Egyptians

2 The Aztecs

3 The Navajo

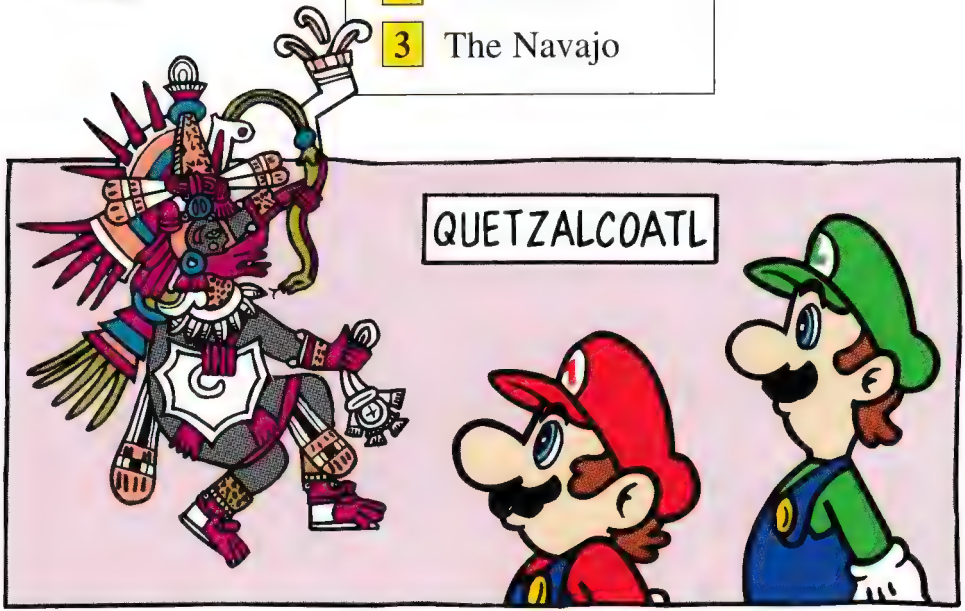

Illustration: Gary Fields

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Quetzalcoatl

Quetzalcoatl was depicted as a half bird, half serpent god. His long plumed tail resembles that of a quetzal, a beautiful colorful bird.

2 The Aztecs worshipped the feathered serpent god, Quetzalcoatl.

© Sipa Icono

Even today Quetzalcoatl is a figure frequently depicted in brightly colored Central American art.

Although Quetzalcoatl is most commonly recognized as being an Aztec god, representations of a feathered snake in Central America go back as far as the 3rd century. In the 9th century, Quetzalcoatl was a Toltec Indian god. He was the morning and evening star god, symbol of death and rebirth. The temple built in his honor was the center of ceremonial activity.

God of Learning

When the Aztecs adopted Quetzalcoatl as one of their deities, besides being the morning and evening star god, he also was worshipped as the patron of priests, inventor of the calendar, creator of books, and protector of craftsmen. Because he was the god of learning, writing, and books, he was particularly revered in the Aztec religious colleges where future priests and the children of nobility were educated.

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What is the name of the Loch Ness monster?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Nessie
2. Bessie
3. Bertha

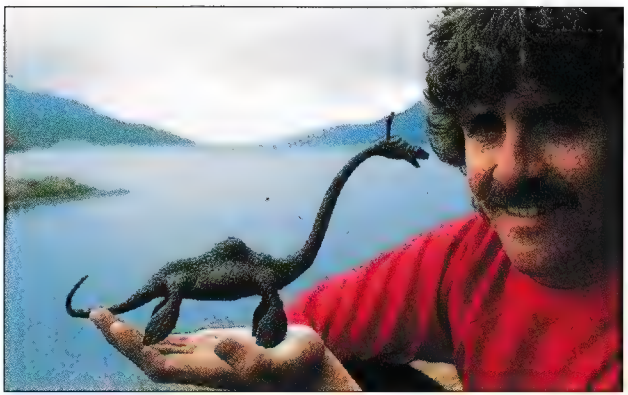
Illustration. Gary Fields

©1995 Nintendo

The Loch Ness Monster

Nessie is a legendary monster said to live in Loch Ness, a lake located in Scotland.

1 The Loch Ness monster's name is Nessie.



© Rex / Sipa Press

Some people believe that Nessie is a dinosaur who somehow managed to survive extinction.

Sightings of Nessie, the Loch Ness Monster, are said to date back as far 565, when she supposedly was seen by Saint Colomba. Since then hunters have claimed to find giant footsteps along the shores of Loch Ness and one man even believes he took a picture of the monster. Unfortunately, it is a fuzzy picture of something that could look like a head attached to a long neck coming out of the lake—if you wish to see it that way.

Does Nessie Exist?

Scientists have been unable to prove (or disprove) that Nessie exists, despite efforts to locate her with the help of sonar, which detects objects underwater using sound waves.

In any case, imaginary or real, Nessie has made Loch Ness world famous. The legend of this strange water brings a steady flow of tourists to the area.

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What is the age-old superstition concerning black cats?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. They bring good luck
2. They bring bad luck
3. They bring good weather

Illustration: Gary Fields

©1995 Nintendo

Superstitions

During the Middle Ages people were very superstitious. To them black cats were an object of terror. Associated with witches, black cats were diabolic creatures used to conjure evil spells.

Cats have been kept as pets for at least 3,500 years. In ancient Egypt, cats were adored. Besides keeping grain storage areas free of mice and rats, cats had grace and intelligence the Egyptians admired. They even buried mummy mice with their mummy cats so the cats wouldn't go hungry in their afterlife. Other cultures such as Arabs, Greeks, and Indians, have respected and admired cats for ages. However, some Europeans during the Middle Ages blamed black cats for all sorts of disastrous events such as epidemics, famines, and floods.

2 Superstition has it that black cats bring bad luck.

© G. Lacz / Sunset

In British legend, cats sat at crossroads at night with gold and treasure which they would give to passersby in return for their souls.

Innocent Victims

Black cats were often the subject of terrible abuse when suspected of being the cause of something negative. Some people tied the poor creatures to logs and burned them alive. Other people threw them from high towers. These people believed that such sacrifice would ensure plentiful harvests.

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What did ancient Egyptians call their sun god?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Bono
2. Ra
3. Tutankhamen

Illustration, Gary Fields

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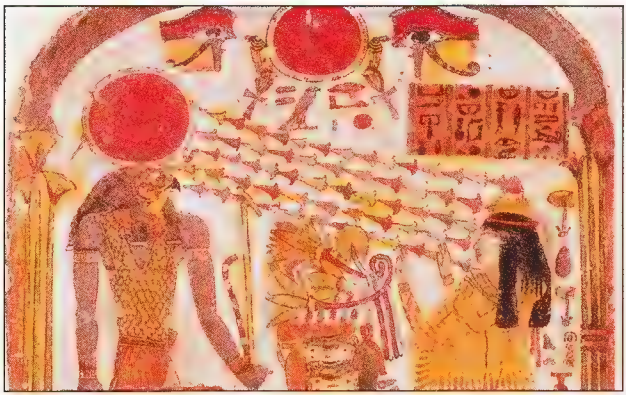
Ra

Many ancient civilizations worshiped the sun as a god. Among them were the ancient Egyptians who named their sun god Ra (also spelled Phra or Re).

2 Ancient Egyptians call their sun god Ra.



© VIP / Sipa Icono

Ra was originally depicted with falcon's head. In later years he was painted with other animal heads as well.

Ra was the ancient Egyptian god of sun and creation. His cult was promoted at the beginning of the 5th dynasty of pharaohs (2494-2345 B.C.) by Egyptian priests. Wall paintings depict Ra as having a man's body and the head of a falcon. This sun god was thought to travel across the sky in his solar boat every day. At night he was said to travel through the dark underworld in another boat where, in order to emerge into the daylight, he had to conquer the evil serpent Apepi (also called Apophis).

God of Kings

Re was the official god of all Egyptian kings, or pharaohs, and the ultimate source of right and justice. All the kings claimed to be either descendants of the sun god or an incarnation of Ra.

During the New Kingdom period of ancient Egypt Ra was joined with another deity named Amen and became Amen-Ra.

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Which Greek god rode on a chariot of fire?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Hades
2. Helios
3. Hermes

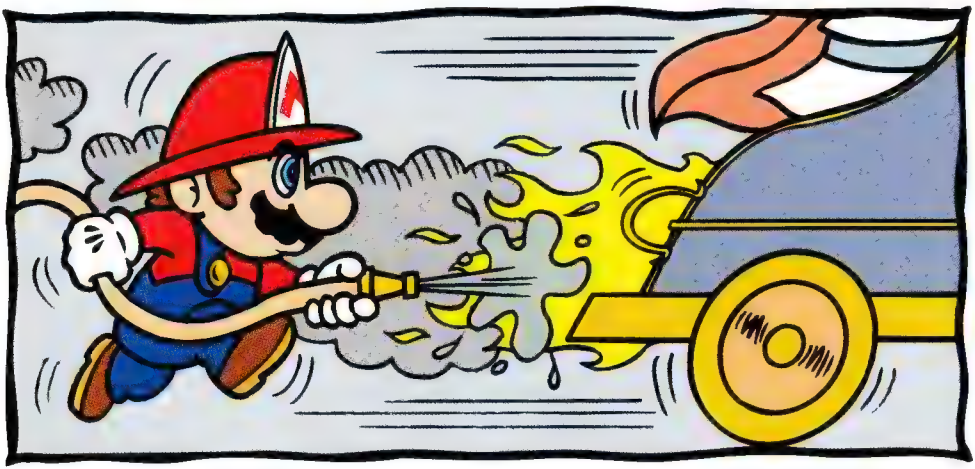

Illustration: Gary Fields

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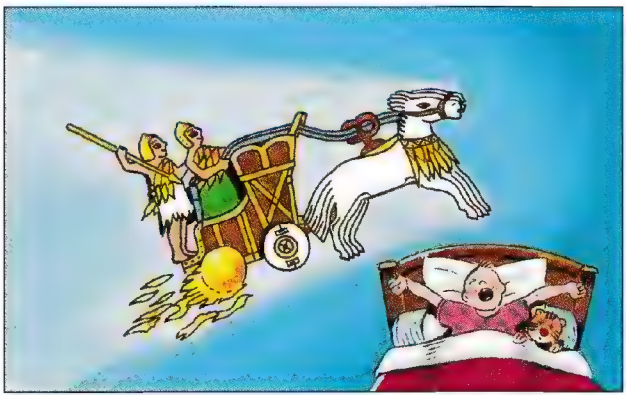
Helios

The Greek god of the sun, Helios, was so radiant and bright that only other gods could look at him—mere mortals could not.

2 Helios was the Greek god who rode on a chariot of fire.



© Yves Tabarie

The sun's course across the sky has inspired many legends throughout time.

Helios, whose name means "sun" in Greek, was one of the principal gods in ancient Greece. He was a very handsome god, whose head was surrounded by a crown of rays. Helios was particularly well-worshiped on the island of Rhodes, which the inhabitants believed belonged to him.

Daily Schedule

Greek legend says that Helios rode across the sky from east to west every day in a glowing chariot pulled by four horses. At night he was believed to sail eastward around the northerly stream of Ocean in a vessel of gold, back to his palace. Travel by sea was believed to be shorter than travel by air so Helios was able to spend some time at home before heading out across the sky again. Helios owned a snow-white cow for each day of the year and a large flock of white woolly sheep for each night.

Eventually, Helios became identified with other deities, such as Apollo.

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Who was the god of fire in Greek mythology?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Dionysus
2. Zeus
3. Hephaestus

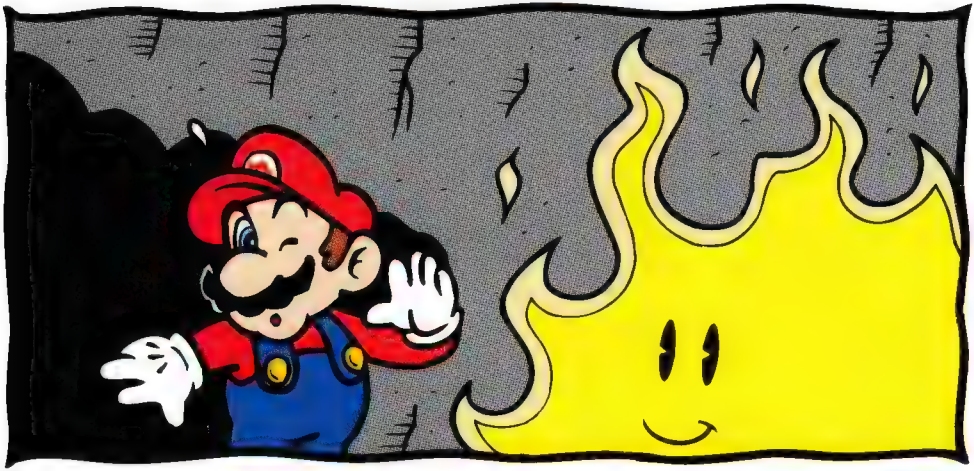

Illustration: Gary Fields

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Hephaestus

Hephaestus was the hard-working and peace-loving son of Zeus and Hera, king and queen of the Greeks gods. He was the God of blacksmiths and fire.

3 Hephaestus was the god of fire in Greek mythology.

© Goebert / Sipa Press

Mount Etna, on the island of Sicily, is said to have housed some of Hephaestus' forges.

Unlike most gods, who were known for their strength and physical beauty, Hephaestus was born lame and had trouble walking all his life. As a baby, Hephaestus tumbled down to Earth from Olympus, the high mountain domain of the gods. He was rescued by Thetis, a sea goddess, who taught him the craft of blacksmithing.

When he returned to Olympus, Hephaestus built a workshop. It was in this workshop that he made twelve golden thrones for the gods. He also made their weapons, chariots, and jewelry.

Volcano forges

Hephaestus had forges located in volcanoes on Earth as well. His helpers at these forges were the one-eyed Cyclopses. When the young god worked at these forges the banging of his hammers could be heard for miles, and sparks flew out of the volcano's opening.

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What country considers cows sacred?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Laos
2. Luxembourg
3. India

Illustration Gary Fields

©1995 Nintendo

Sacred Cows

In India, cows are considered sacred. Cattle there are protected, and even non-vegetarian Hindus do not eat beef.

3 In India, where most people are Hindus, cows are considered sacred.

© Maury / Sipa Press

In India sacred cows walk freely through the streets.

Hinduism is one of the world's oldest religions. It is practiced by over 700 million people worldwide. Most of them live in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal.

Three Major Sects

Hinduism is polytheistic—based on the belief in more than one god. There are three main sects, or groups, of Hindus: the followers of Vishnu, the followers of Shiva, and the followers of Shakti. The god Vishnu is the protector and preserver of the world. Shiva means "fortunate one" in Sanskrit. Shiva is considered the primary creator and destroyer of the universe. Shakti is the mother goddess. Like Shiva, she has the power to either destroy or create. The Vedas are the sacred texts recognized by all Hindus, although particular sects may also have their own scriptures.

According to Hinduism, both animals and humans have souls and several animals are considered sacred. Hindus believe in reincarnation, or the return of a soul after death in either animal or human form.

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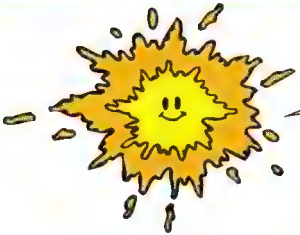
Which is a Christian symbol?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS



1 A star of David

2 A cross

3 Yin and Yang

Illustration, Gary Fields

©1995 Nintendo

Cross

The symbol of the cross has been used by many cultures since the beginning of time. The straight pole with a crossbar used to crucify Jesus is the main symbol of Christianity today.

2 A cross is a Christian symbol.

© Len Sirman

The symbol of the cross holds a central place in the Christian religion.

The word "cross" comes from the Latin word *crux*. In ancient times, a crux was a stake used to impale wrong-doers. As time went on, the Christian cross designs changed and various horizontals were added.

Non-Christian Crosses

The Greek cross has two bars of equal length intersecting each other at right angles in the center. For many ancient people this cross symbolized the four elements of creation—air, earth, water, and fire. The tau cross, shaped like a "T," was the ancient Egyptian symbol of life. With a loop-shaped circle on top of the cross, the symbol signified eternity. This symbol is often called an ankh.

The left directed swastika represented solar power and movement in certain ancient Asian, European, and pre-Colombian cultures. The Nazi party in Germany adopted the right directed swastika as its insignia in 1920.

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Which is a symbol of China?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1 Anteater
2 Dragon
3 Rhinoceros

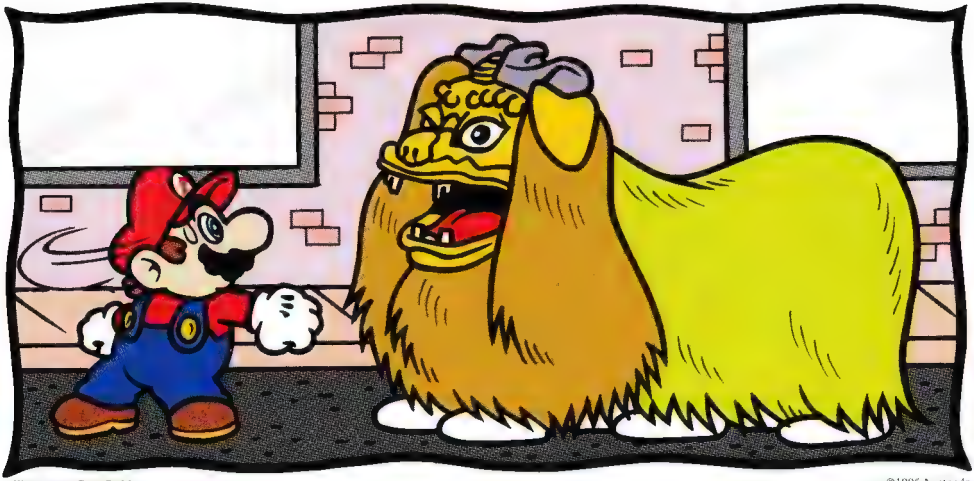

Illustration: Gary Fields

©1995 Nintendo

Dragons

Throughout the world, dragons often represent evil but in China many are considered good. The dragon was adopted as the national emblem of the Chinese Empire because it was a symbol of good fortune.

2 The dragon is a symbol of China.

© Len Sirman

The dragon is a central character in the Chinese New Year celebrations, which occur in the springtime.

Even though only imaginary, dragons have lived in myths and legends for thousands of years. Dragons are often large, fierce, reptile-like monsters. Some are winged, some breathe fire and smoke, others wipe out their human opponents with one flick of their enormous powerful tails. Dragons often hide in dark caves guarding treasure. Ancient Greek and Roman mythology credits dragons with the ability to communicate the secrets of the earth to mankind.

Asian Folklore

Dragons have held a particularly prominent position in Asian folklore, literature and art. The Chinese dragon is said to awaken in the spring in time for the new year. He watches over the harvest and brings prosperity.

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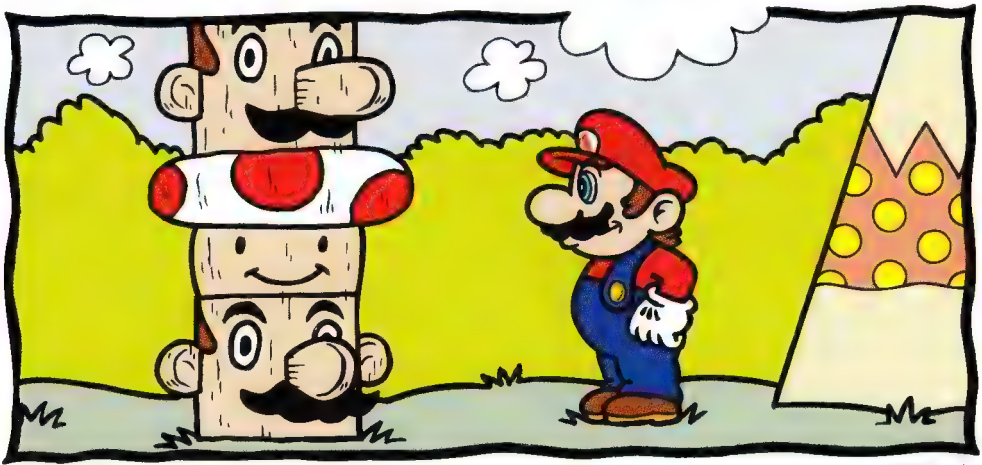
What is a totem?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. A piece of luggage
2. An animal, plant, or natural object serving as the emblem of a family, clan, or group
3. A Buddhist priest



Illustration, Gary Fields

©1995 Nintendo

Totems

Totemism is based on the belief that human beings and nature are related. Societies may choose as their totem a bird, animal, plant, or natural phenomenon.

2 **A totem is an animal, plant, or natural object serving as the emblem of a family, clan, or group.**

© Len Sirman

These are American Indian Totem Poles.

Often, a clan—a subgroup of a society—is named after its totem, and clan members believe they share a mythical ancestry with their totem. Sometimes, clan members avoid eating, killing, or even touching their totem, if it is an animal, and they hold rituals aimed at increasing the animal's well-being. Totems may also be the focus of special celebrations.

Anthropologists believe that totems serve to unify a group of people with shared interests and give them a special identity.

Totem Poles

You've probably heard of totem poles. Northwest Coast Indians including the Haida, Tlingit, and Tsimshian, carve images of their totems into enormous wooden posts to commemorate certain events, show land ownership, and honor the dead. Their carvings depict ancestors along with the animal or human spirits that helped them.

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Who was Anubis?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. A country and western singer
2. An Egyptian god of the dead
3. A fashion model

Illustration: Gary Fields

© 1993 Nintendo

Anubis

Anubis, Egyptian god of the dead, was said to have a human body and the head of a jackal, or wild dog. He was considered the inventor of embalming, or treating the bodies of the dead to prevent decomposition.

2 Anubis was the Egyptian god of the dead.

© Dorval/Explorer

Anubis led the dead to Osiris to be judged.

Anubis was an important figure for dynasties of the Old Kingdom in Egypt (before 1570 B.C.). The Egyptians believed Anubis took people's souls to be judged before they went to heaven or to the underworld. For this reason, he is called the conductor of souls. It was common to inscribe a prayer asking for Anubis' guidance at the entry of the tombs of important people.

Underworld Gods

Anubis is believed to have practiced the art of embalming for the first time on the corpse of Osiris, with the help of Osiris' wife, Isis. By about 2400 B.C. the Egyptians considered Osiris to be the king of the underworld. Osiris symbolized eternal life, which the Egyptians hoped to attain through embalming.

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What are Muses?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Clowns
2. Greek sister goddesses of the arts
3. Scientific instruments

Illustration, Gary Fields

©1995 Nintendo

Muses

In Greek mythology, the Muses were the nine daughters of Zeus and the Titaness Mnemosyne. Their divine singing delighted the gods, and they inspired all thought.

2 **The Muses are Greek sister goddesses of the arts.**

© North Wind Pictures

Polyhymnia, Calliope, Terpsichore, Urania, and Melpomene are depicted on a hand-colored woodcut.

Mnemosyne, mother of the nine Muses, was the goddess of memory. She knew all that had happened since the beginning of time. She would gather her nine daughters around her and tell them wonderful tales. The stories inspired the Muses to write poems and songs.

Apollo, god of music, taught the Muses how to sing. Their singing was so beautiful that even the birds fell silent.

Divine Inspiration

The Muses were believed to inspire thinking, especially creative or artistic thought. Each Muse was responsible for a different form: Calliope for epic and heroic poetry, Clio for history, Erato for love poetry, Euterpe for music and lyric poetry, Melpomene for tragedy, Polyhymnia for hymns to the gods, Terpsichore for dance, Thailia for comedy, and Urania for astronomy.

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Who was Poseidon?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Greek god of the ocean
2. Rocky's first opponent
3. An ancient philosopher

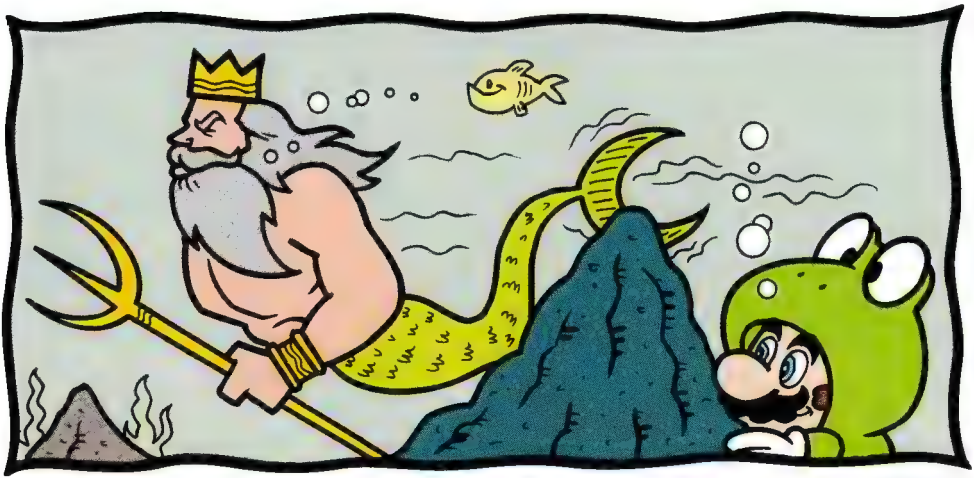

Illustration Gary Fields

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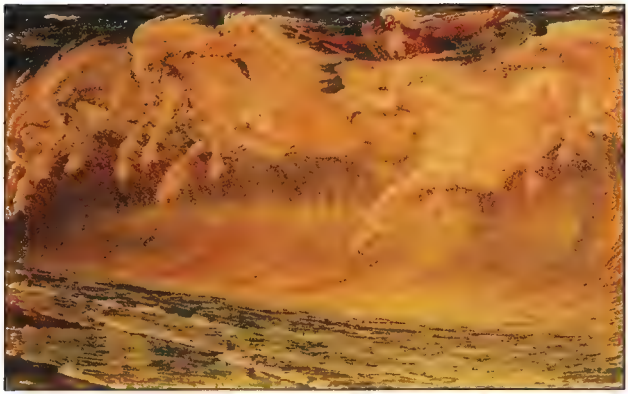
Poseidon

Poseidon ruled the sea, while his brother Zeus governed the heavens and earth.

1 Poseidon was the Greek god of the ocean.



© P.W. Corrane / VIP Sipa-Icono

Poseidon's team of horses race the waves. In Roman mythology, the God of the ocean was known as Neptune.

Poseidon is often represented as a bearded and majestic figure armed with a trident—a three-pronged spear. He was a moody and restless god who loved to race the waves with his team of horses. In fact, it is said that he created the horse in the shape of breaking waves.

His Powers

In Greek mythology, Poseidon was called the Earthshaker. When he was angry, he could make the waves of the sea rise up like mountains, and the winds howl. The Earth would tremble when he struck it with his trident. But when he was calm, he would stretch out his hand to still the sea and make new lands rise out of the water.

Poseidon was married to Amphitrite, the daughter of an old sea god, Nereus, who had a fishtail instead of legs. But Poseidon had many love affairs and many children. He and Medusa were the parents of Pegasus, the famous winged horse.

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What is Atlantis?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. A legendary island
2. A submarine
3. A sports car model

Illustration: Gary Fields

©1995 Nintendo

Atlantis

Atlantis is a legendary island thought to have existed in the Western Ocean, west of the known world, near the Pillars of Hercules.

1 Atlantis is a legendary island.

© L. Carré / VIP Sipa-Icono

Did Atlantis really exist, or was it just imaginary, like a mirage in the desert?

According to one of Greek historian and philosopher Plato's accounts, Atlantis was described by an ancient Egyptian priest as being a large continent. In another treatise Plato describes Atlantis as being a utopian commonwealth —an ideal place ruled by the people. The name Atlantis has come to mean a perfect society.

Atlantis in Greek Mythology

In Greek mythology, when the gods divided up the earth, Athena was given Athens, Greece's most important city, but Poseidon claimed Atlantis, an island rich in minerals and marvelous plants. Poseidon lived there with Clito. Together, they had five sets of twins. Each child ruled over a portion of the island. They built magnificent cities and intended to rule the world, but they were conquered by the Athenians.

Legend has it that Atlantis was destroyed in a massive earthquake. Today there are still archaeologists who search for the lost continent of Atlantis.

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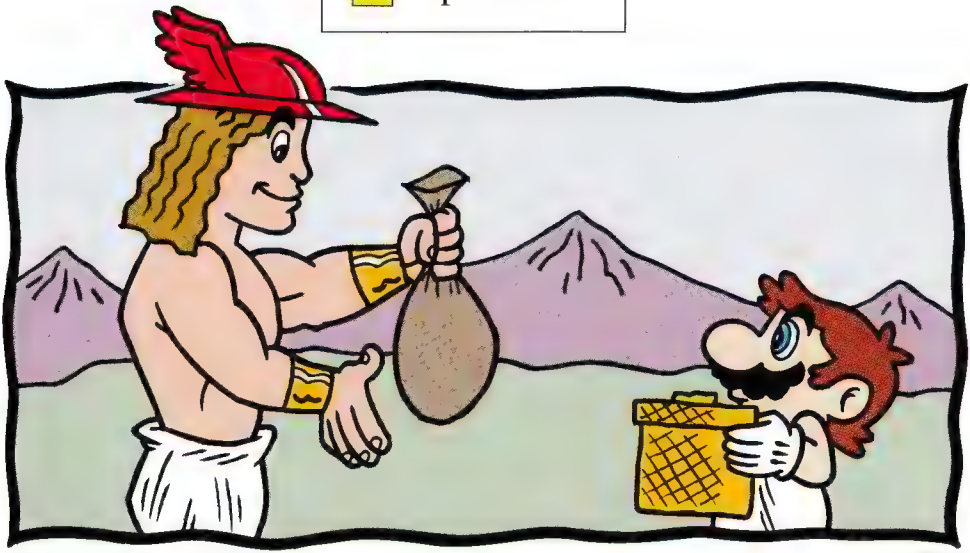
Who is the Greek god of trade and merchants?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Hermes
2. Zeus
3. Aphrodite



Illustration, Gary Fields

©1996 Nintendo

Hermes

The Greek god Hermes is identified with the Roman god Mercury. Like Mercury, Hermes was said to protect merchants and trading. He was also the gods' messenger, and the god of athletes.

1 Hermes is the Greek god of trade and merchants.

© Giraudon

Hermes' counterpart in Roman mythology is Mercury.

Hermes bears a golden caduceus, or wand, decorated with snakes and wings. He wears winged sandals and a broad, winged hat. He was believed to lead the souls of the dead to the underworld and to have magical powers over sleep and dreams. As the god of athletes, he watched over stadiums and was thought to bring good luck and wealth to those he favored.

Hermes' Dark Side

Hermes was also a troublemaker. He was cruel to his enemies, played mean tricks, and stole things. According to one story, the day he was born he stole the cattle of his brother Apollo, the sun god. Hermes made the herd walk backward, so that their tracks would confuse their owner. He made up with Apollo by giving him a stringed instrument called a lyre, which Hermes had invented.

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Who was Viracocha?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. A Spanish painter
2. An Inca Sun god
3. An opera singer

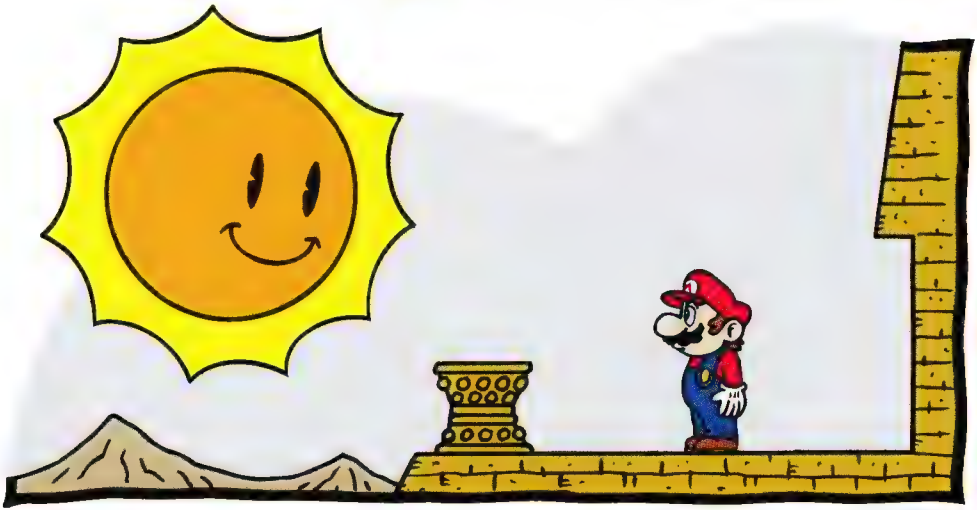

Illustration Gary Fields

©1996 Nintendo

Viracocha

Viracocha was the god of rain to the pre-Inca Indians of Peru. The Indians believed that Viracocha created the Sun and the Moon on lake Titicaca, followed by the heavens and the earth.

2 Viracocha was an Inca Sun god.

© D. Gourdin / Hoaqui

Above are the ruins of the Saqsaywaman temple in Cuzco, Peru, where many important religious ceremonies took place.

After creating heaven and earth, legend has it that Viracocha traveled around teaching men the arts of civilization. Viracocha was sometimes depicted as an old bearded man who carried a long staff. This was a popular image for water gods in ancient times. The Greek god Poseidon and the Roman god Neptune both carried three-pronged staffs called tridents.

Creator of Gods

The Inca god, Viracocha, was believed to have created all the lesser gods. He watched over these gods as they carried out the daily duties of running the world.

In the early 15th century, an Inca ruler took the ancient god's Viracocha's name. Archaeologists believe that this ruler was responsible for adding this god to the Inca pantheon, or list of gods.

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Which is the Holy City to three religions?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Bethlehem
2. Rome
3. Jerusalem

Illustration: Gary Fields

©1996 Nintendo

Holy City

Jerusalem is revered by Jews, Christians, and Muslims—each for different reasons. Its "modern" history goes back 5,000 years. People of many cultures live there, and the issue of who should rule the city has at times been thorny.

3 Jerusalem is the Holy City to three religions.

© Len Sirman

This is the Wailing Wall, part of the ruins of Herod's Temple in Jerusalem. For Jews, it is a traditional place of prayer.

Jerusalem, historical capital of the Jews, scene of many of the events of Christ's life, site of Mohammed's rise to heaven, is important to all three religions. The site of Jerusalem was occupied as early as the Stone Age—sometime between 2,000,000 and 8000 B.C.

Holy Sites

Jerusalem is composed of an Old City, where many shrines of the three religions are located, a New City (West Jerusalem), and East Jerusalem. In the Old City are The Western—or Wailing—Wall (a supporting wall of the Second Temple, built by Herod and the most sacred place in Judaism), the Church of the Holy Sepulcher (the traditional site of Christ's tomb), and the Muslim Dome of the Rock (the site of Mohammed's ascension to heaven).

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What is Christianity?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. A group of stories by Hans Christian Andersen
2. A religion
3. A type of dessert

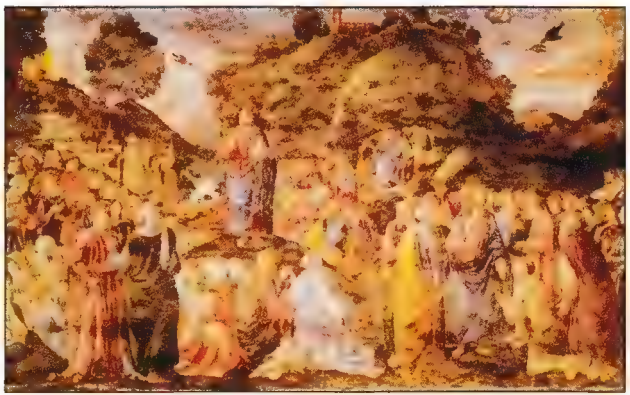
Illustration: Gary Fields

©1996 Nintendo

Christianity

Christianity is the name for all of the religions based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

2 Christianity is a religion that includes the Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Orthodox churches.



© Y Taburiès

Christians are divided into several denominations, each of which interprets Jesus' message differently.

Almost 2,000 years ago, the Romans occupied Palestine, a country in southwest Asia. A Jewish man from Galilee, named Jesus, came to Palestine preaching the love of God and the love of humankind. Jesus announced that he was God's Son sent to Earth to spread God's word and to die so that the sins of humankind would be forgiven. His disciples believed him to be the great Messiah who had been foretold by the Israelite prophets. But Jesus and his teachings were different from those of the Orthodox Jews and those of the Roman authorities, who feared an uprising from the people. Ultimately, Jesus was arrested and sentenced to death by crucifixion.

A New Message

Jesus' life, teachings, and resurrection are told in the Gospels, certain books in the Bible written by his followers. Gospel means "good news" because it refers to Jesus' message of hope.

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What is the Vatican?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. The seat of the Roman Catholic Church
2. A church in Moscow's Red Square
3. The main plaza in Venice

Illustration Gary Fields

©1996 Nintendo

Vatican

Rome was chosen as the center of the Catholic Church by Peter, one of the twelve apostles, who died around 65 AD, some 30 years after the death of Jesus.

1 The Vatican is the seat of the Roman Catholic Church.

© Len Sirman

After the apostle Peter chose the site of the Vatican, he was martyred, or put to death for his beliefs, by the Roman emperor Nero.

The Vatican, home to the pope, the leader of the Catholic Church, is located in Rome, Italy, but it's actually a separate city-state. It covers 109 acres and has about 1,800 inhabitants. The city is walled in and only three entrances are open to the public. It has its own telephone system, post office, and radio station, as well as an army of more than 100 Swiss Guards, its own banking system and coinage, stores, and a pharmacy.

Masterpieces

Tourists visit the Vatican because of its religious significance and to see the great works of art it contains. The most famous art treasure in the Vatican is the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, painted by the Italian Renaissance artist Michelangelo.

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What are UFOs?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Uniformed Foreign Officials
2. Uranium-Free Organisms
3. Unidentified Flying Objects

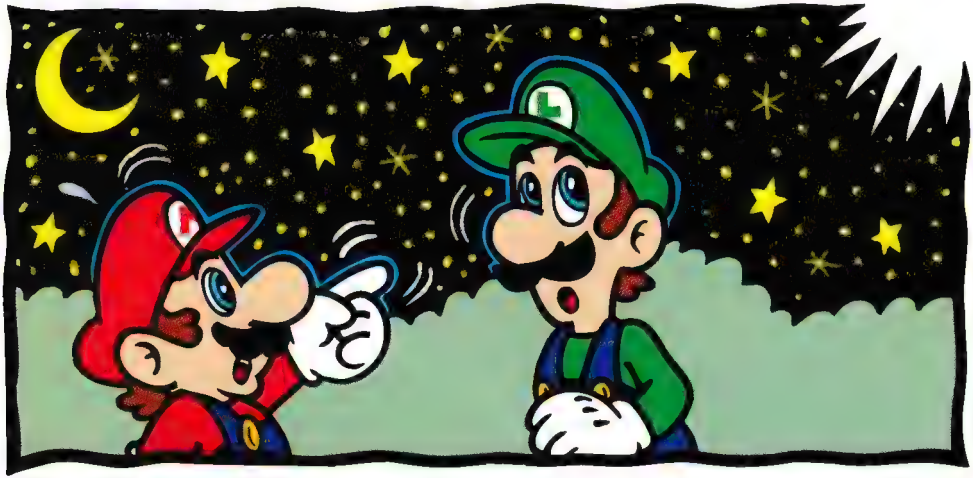

Illustration Gary Fields

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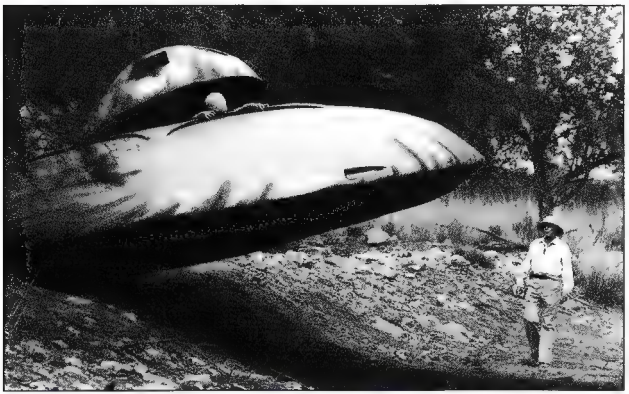
UFOs

The objects most often mistaken for UFOs are bright planets and stars, aircraft, birds, balloons, kites, clouds, meteors, and satellites. Though there is no scientific evidence to prove the theory, some people think UFOs are spacecraft from other planets.

3 UFOs are flying objects that cannot be identified.



© Greg Pereth

Abduction by space aliens is a common theme in science fiction films.

The first widely publicized UFO sighting in the United States was in 1947, and since then thousands of sightings have been reported around the world.

Project Blue Book

In 1948 the U.S. Air Force started a file of reported UFO sightings called Project Blue Book. The U.S. government established a panel of engineers, meteorologists, physicists, and an astronomer to study the occurrences. The panel was organized by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and briefed on U.S. military activities and intelligence. The report produced by the scientists revealed that 90 percent of the UFO sightings could be easily explained by man-made objects, weather, or normal astronomical activity.

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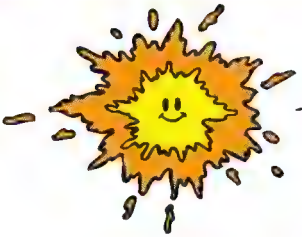
How many religions are there in the world?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS



1. Roughly 10 main religions
2. Roughly 100 main religions
3. Roughly 1000 main religions

Illustration: Gary Fields

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World Religion

Today there are many living religions. The main ones are Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto, Zoroastrianism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. These religions together have a total of more than 3 billion followers.

1 Of the innumerable religions in the world today, there are roughly 10 main religions.

© Nathan Olshm

In communities across the country various faiths worship side-by-side.

Jehovah's Witnesses represent one of the various branches of Christianity. Their group was founded in 1872 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and today they have congregations in more than 200 countries. The group's international headquarters is in Brooklyn, New York.

Core Beliefs

Members of the Jehovah's Witnesses believe in the second coming of Christ, follow a literal interpretation of the Bible, and consider each Witness a minister. The group's teachings are spread primarily by members who preach from door to door and distribute literature on street corners. Witnesses are loyal only to the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and refuse to salute any flag, vote, perform military service, or show loyalty to any government in any way.

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What is an omen?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. An observed sign used in predicting the future
2. A type of devil
3. A garment worn by nomadic peoples

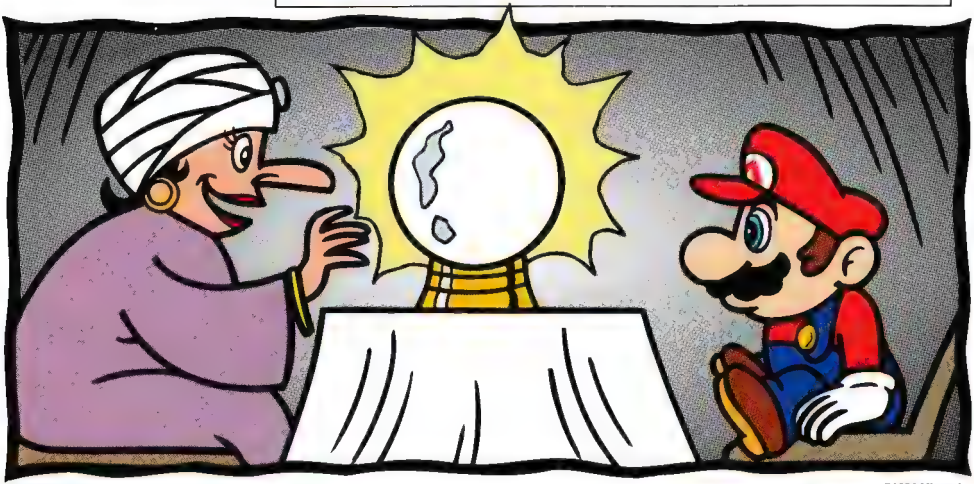

Illustration: Gary Fields

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Oracle of Delphi

The Temple of Delphi was dedicated to the Greek god Apollo, who was said to speak there through a priestess known as an oracle.

1 **An omen is an observed sign used in predicting the future.**

© L.Y. Lorrat / Explorer

These are the ruins of one of the temples of Apollo, at Delphi. People came from far and wide to ask questions of Apollo through his oracle.

In ancient Greece, oracles were priests or priestesses who communicated the response of a god to a questioner. Some oracles were thought to communicate with ancestors, some could receive their messages through objects such as rustling leaves, and some received them through sounds or even in dreams.

Oracles were always associated with a specific person or place, and the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi (an ancient inland city in Greece) was one of the most famous. Apollo was worshiped as an important god, and the ruins of three temples dedicated to him may still be seen there. The earliest temple dates from 600 B.C.

Omens

Omens, unlike oracles, were not people, but events, such as lightning, the movement of clouds or other signs. Omens were seen as a means of predicting the future and of knowing whether to expect good luck.

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Who was Sobek?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. An ancient Egyptian crocodile-god
2. A ruler of the Klingon Empire
3. A great Eastern European violinist

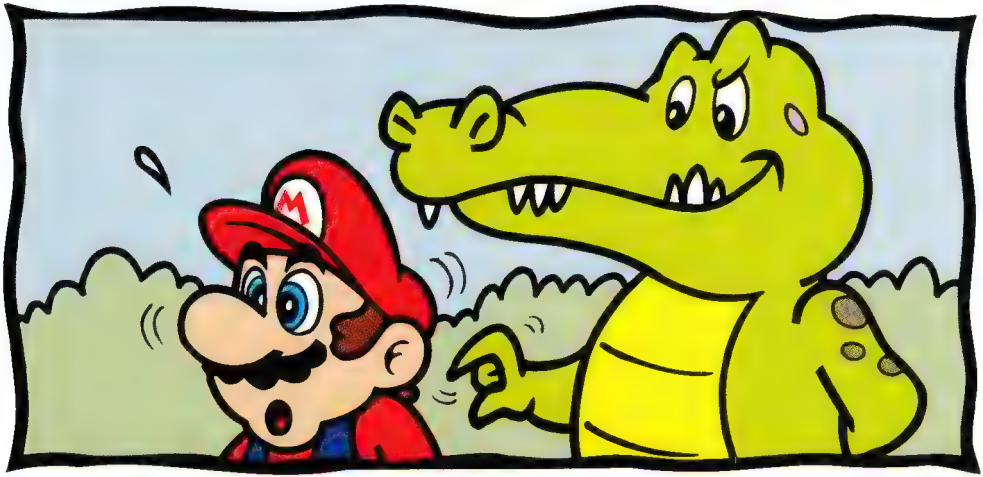

Illustration: Gary Fields

©1996 Nintendo

Sobek

Cats were worshiped in Ancient Egypt—even mummified. So were other animals, including crocodiles. Sobek, the crocodile-god, became the patron of kings.

1 Sobek was an ancient Egyptian crocodile-god.

© P. Tetrel / Explorer

This scene shows how Sobek, the crocodile-god was fed in the pool of his temple and how he was later mummified.

Sobek, also spelled Sebek, was an Egyptian crocodile-god. At first he was worshiped as a funeral god or a fertility god, but around 1850 B.C. he became the protector of kings, and he was later joined with the sun god, Re (or Ra). It is interesting to note that Re was depicted with the head of a hawk.

Animal Mummies

Just as the ancient Egyptians preserved the bodies of their pharaohs or kings, they preserved the bodies of some animals.

Sobek was said to live within the body of a crocodile, so the ancient Egyptians thought it was important to make some crocodiles into mummies to preserve their bodies for the afterlife.

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What is a menorah?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. A goblet used in wedding ceremonies
2. A candelabra with eight branches used for Chanukah
3. An old-fashioned Easter basket

Illustration: Gary Fields

©1996 Nintendo

Menorah

The eight candles placed in the menorah symbolize the miracle of Chanukah: A single day's supply of oil burned for eight days in the Temple of Jerusalem.

2 **A menorah is a candelabra with eight branches used for the Jewish holiday of Chanukah.**

© Bushnell / Solfer / Tony Stone Images, Inc.

Menorahs come in many different styles and sizes. All of them have space for eight candles plus the shammash.

Chanukah is a Jewish festival celebrated every year beginning on the 25th day of Kislev on the Jewish calendar. It usually falls in December of the Gregorian calendar. Chanukah commemorates the Jews' recapture of the Temple of Jerusalem from the Syrian Greeks in 165 B.C.

Once recaptured, the Temple had to be rededicated. Only a single container of pure olive oil blessed by the high priest could be found for the rededication ritual. Miraculously, this tiny bit of oil burned for eight days.

Eight-Day Celebration

Chanukah is celebrated for eight consecutive days. One additional candle of the eight-branched menorah is lit each night using a special candle called the shammash. The shammash sits above the eight other candles in the menorah. On the eighth and last night of Chanukah, all the candles are lit.

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What ancient mythological creature has nine snake heads?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Hydra
2. Anubis
3. Pegasus

Illustration Gary Fields

©1996 Nintendo

Hercules

Hercules was a mythological hero renowned for his strength and bravery. To make up for killing his family, he performed twelve difficult tasks, including killing the Hydra.

1 **The Hydra is a mythological creature with nine snake heads.**

© Scala / Sipa / Icono

After killing the Hydra, Hercules dipped his arrows into its blood to make them poisonous.

Hercules was the son of Zeus and Alcmene, the wife of a general. Hera, Zeus' wife, was jealous of Hercules and plotted to kill him. When Hercules was a baby, she sent two huge snakes to attack him. Baby Hercules was so strong that he was able to strangle the snakes. When Hercules was an adult, Hera cast a spell upon him that caused him to kill his wife and three children.

Twelve Tasks

Hercules was horrified by what he had done and wanted to make up for it. His cousin, the King of Mycenae, devised twelve difficult tasks—the Labors of Hercules—as a penance. Hercules performed the second task, killing the Hydra, by burning off its eight mortal heads and burying the immortal one beneath a large rock.

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What is the Chimera?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Roman Goddess of light
2. Monster of Greek mythology
3. Famous Hindu temple

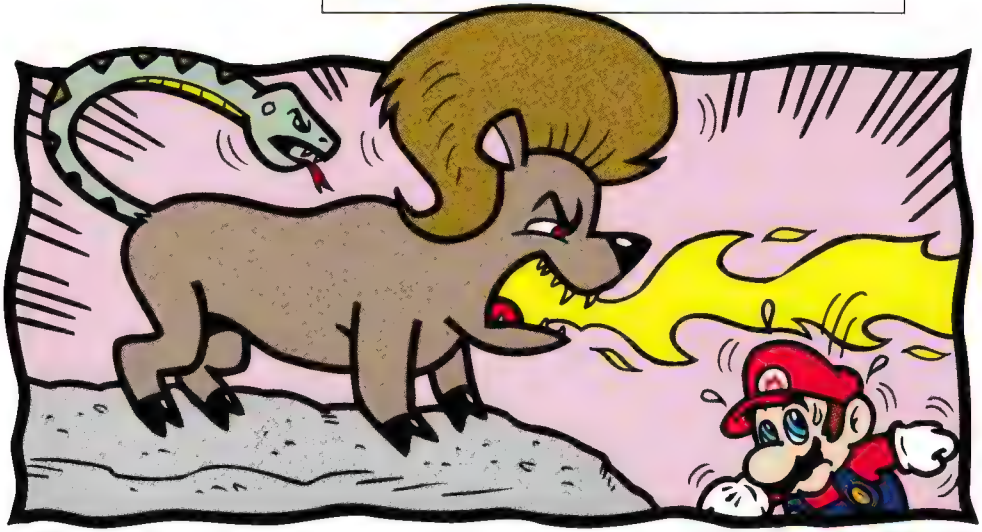

Illustration Gary Fields

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Chimera

According to Greek mythology, the Chimera, with the body of a goat, the head of a lion, and the tail of a dragon, terrorized the region of Lycia, now part of Turkey.

2 **The Chimera is a fire-breathing monster of Greek mythology.**

© Edimédia

The formidable Chimera was part goat, part lion, and part dragon.

The Chimera could spit fire and would devour everyone who crossed its path. The king of Lycia asked Bellerophon, the son of the king of Corinth, to eliminate the Chimera. Riding Pegasus, a winged horse who could run faster than the wind, Bellerophon struck and killed the Chimera with poison arrows.

After killing the Chimera, Bellerophon successfully completed even more difficult missions. Later, when he attempted to ride Pegasus to Mount Olympus, home of the gods, jealous Zeus, king of the gods, caused Pegasus to crash. Bellerophon was badly injured.

Homer's Chimera

According to the author Homer, the Chimera was so enormous that no one could ever measure it. Artists of the Middle Ages often depicted it in their sculptures. The Chimera was the model for many of the gargoyles which adorn Europe's cathedrals.

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What is Islam?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Country in northern Asia
2. A modern religion
3. Autumn harvest ritual

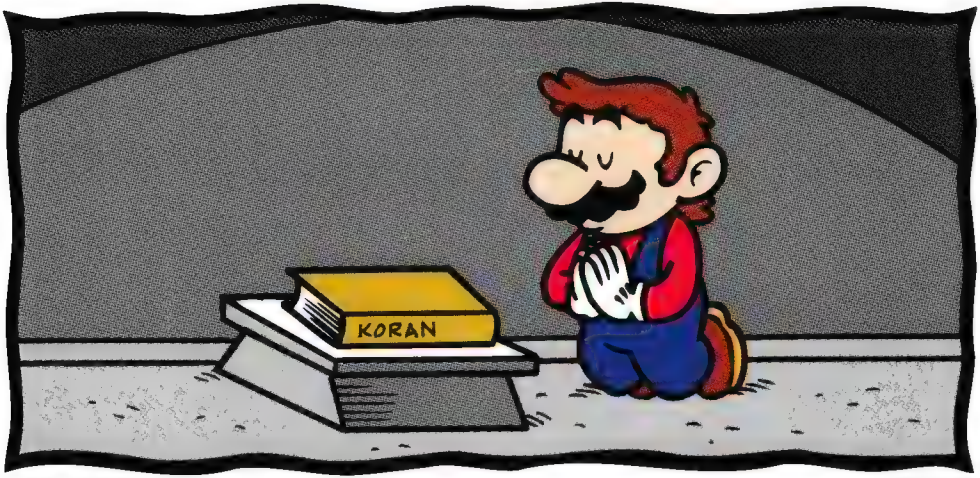

Illustration: Gary Fields

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Islam

Muslims, or followers of Islam, believe that the prophet Mohammed received a message from God, or Allah. This message is written in the Koran, or Muslim holy book.

2 Islam is a religion founded by Mohammed in the 7th century A.D.

© Len Sirman

Muslims kneel to pray five times a day. While praying, they face the Muslim holy city of Mecca.

As monotheists, Muslims believe in one God. They belong to different sects and live in many different cultures. Still, they consider themselves members of a single community linked by the same profession of faith: "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is the prophet of Allah."

The Five Pillars

The Five Pillars of Islam form the foundation of the religion. According to the First Pillar, all Muslims must recite the profession of faith at least once in their lifetime. Second, Muslims must pray together publicly five times a day. Third, they must pay a tax called the zakat to help the needy. Fourth, Muslims must fast every day from sunrise to sunset during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Fifth, all Muslims who are able must make a pilgrimage, or hadj, to the holy city of Mecca.

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What is the Koran?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Holy book of Islam
2. Monster of Norse mythology
3. Panamanian summer festival

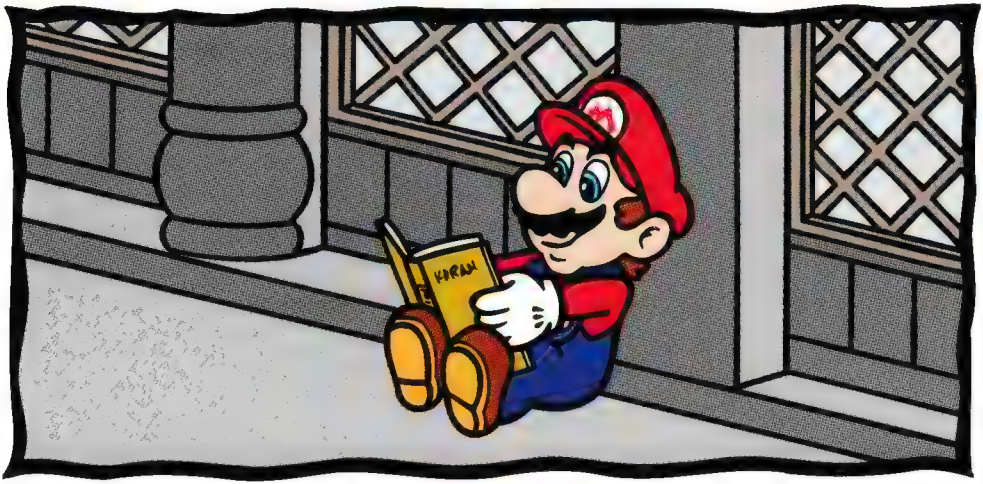

Illustration: Gary Fields

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Koran

Muslims believe that Mohammed was the last great prophet after Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. God's message to Mohammed is recorded in the Koran, or Muslim holy book.

1 The Koran is the holy book of Islam.

© G. Boutin / Explorer

Many Muslims learn the Koran by heart and recite its prayers.

In Arabic, Koran means reading or recitation. The word islam, repeated many times throughout the Koran, signifies surrender to the will of God (whom Muslims call Allah). Muslims believe that Allah is omnipotent, having power over everything and everyone, and omniscient, or all-knowing. Mohammed, though a human, is considered to be second in importance to God.

Muslim Creed

The Muslim creed, or basic system of beliefs, consists of six elements. First is the belief in one God, and second is the belief in angels. Third is faith in the word of Allah, as revealed in the holy writings in the Koran. Fourth is the belief in the prophets. Fifth is the belief in the day of Judgment, and last is the acceptance of Allah's definition of good and evil.

The Koran is the first book that many Muslim children learn to read.

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What is the name of the veil worn by Muslim women?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Yarmulke
2. Yashmak
3. Fedora

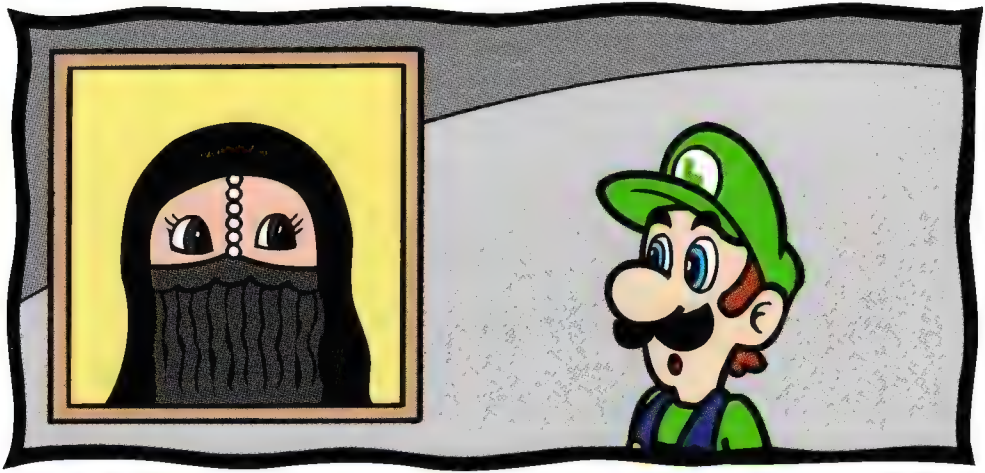

Illustration: Gary Fields

©1996 Nintendo

Yashmak

Muslim women in different regions wear different kinds of veils. A veil may be worn with a chador, a piece of fabric that covers the neck and hair.

2 The long, narrow veil that many Muslim women wear in public is called a yashmak.

© Len Sirman

Muslim women wear veils in public to show their respect for Islamic tradition.

Women in Iran wear large scarves that cover their hair and neck, while many Turkish women wear a veil with only a small slit for the eyes. Some veils are wrapped around the top half of the body as part of a dress.

Women and the Koran

The Koran, or Muslim holy book, contains passages about the wearing of veils. These passages have been interpreted in different ways throughout history. In the past, only women living in the city wore veils. Women who worked in the fields did not. Toward the end of the 19th century, some Muslim women stopped wearing veils, which they believed symbolized the exclusion of women in society. When the Shah of Iran's wife and daughters appeared in public without veils in 1936, most Iranian women stopped wearing veils.

After a change of power in the Iranian government in 1979, many people returned to a more conservative practice of Islam.

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What is the common language among Muslims?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Arabic
2. Hindi
3. Hebrew

Illustration: Gary Fields

©1996 Nintendo

Arabic

Many Muslims learn to read and write Arabic through their study of the Koran, or Muslim holy book. The classical Arabic used in the Koran has changed little since the 7th century A.D.

1 Arabic is the common language among Muslims.

© J.-C. Thoret / Explorer

Muslim houses of worship, like this one in Africa, are called mosques. Prayers, performed five times a day, are recited in Arabic.

Until the 7th century A.D., Arabic was spoken only on the Arabian peninsula. Today, it is the official language of many Middle Eastern countries. It is also spoken in several African countries. There are slight variations in the way modern Arabic is spoken in different countries.

Origins of Arabic

Arabic is a Semitic language closely related to Hebrew. Like Hebrew, Arabic is written from right to left. The modern Arabic alphabet consists primarily of consonants. Vowels are added as marks above and below these letters. Usually, Arabic is written without vowels. They are included only in books for young children and in the Koran.

The English language contains many words derived from Arabic, such as algebra, giraffe, sofa, artichoke, and syrup.

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Who is Brahma?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Greek sea creature
2. Hindu god of creation
3. French cartoon character

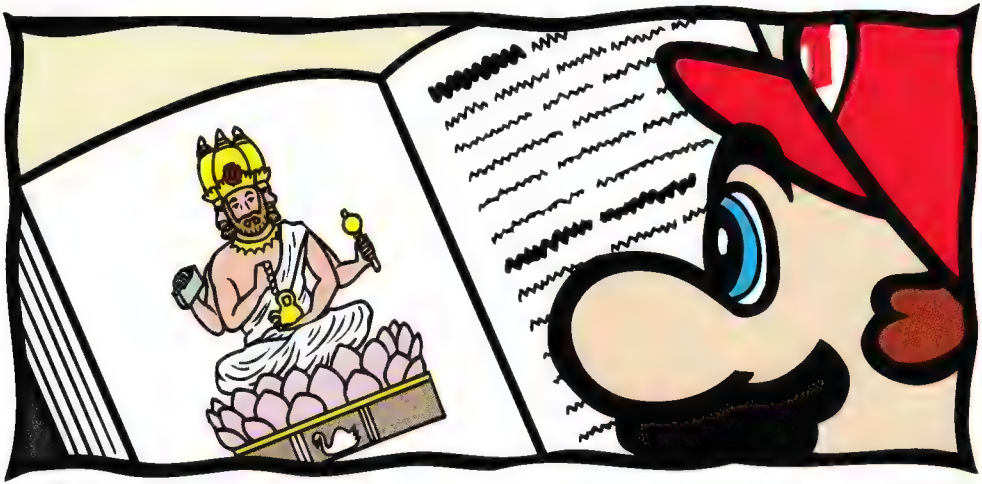

Illustration: Gary Fields

©1996 Nintendo

Brahma

Brahma is one of the main gods of Hinduism. He was the first to recite the Vedas, or ancient Hindu sacred writings.

2 Brahma is the Hindu god of creation.

© Edmedia

Brahma is one of the most important Hindu gods, together with Vishnu and Shiva. Hindus believe he is the creator of all things.

According to an ancient myth, Brahma was born from a golden egg. He is said to have created Earth and the heavens from the two halves of the broken eggshell. Between them he put the sky. Then he created Time, Intelligence, and Desire.

Brahma is usually represented in statues with four arms and four faces: one turned east, one west, one north, and one south. He is usually seated upon a lotus flower throne or a swan, together with his female consorts, or spouses, Savitri and Sarasvati.

Beginnings of Hinduism

An early version of Hinduism was practiced in about 2000 B.C. by a highly developed civilization living in the Indus Valley: the area that is now India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tibet. From about 320 to 480 A.D., following a period of invasions and upheaval, most of India was governed by a single ruler. At that time, sacred Hindu laws were documented and great Hindu temples were built.

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Who is Shiva?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Hindu god of destruction and restoration
2. Kenyan folk singer
3. Walt Disney character

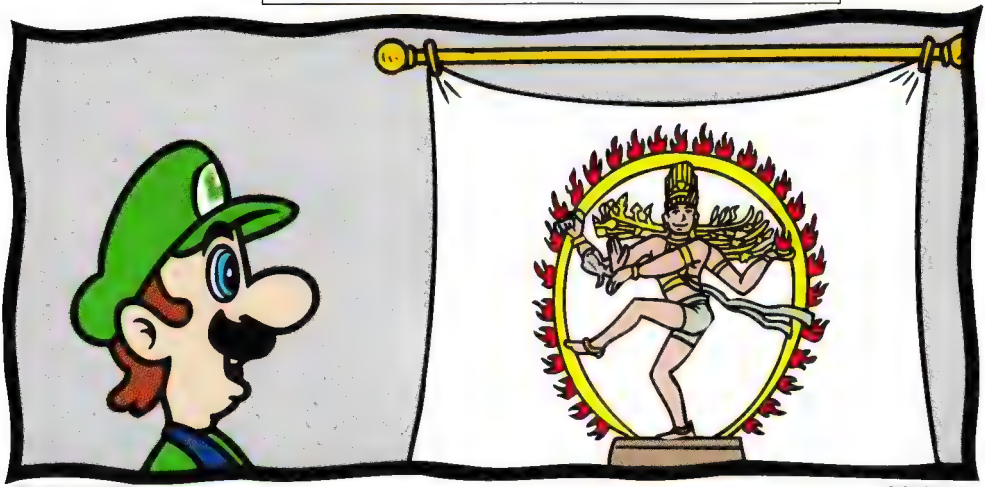

Illustration: Gary Fields

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Shiva

Shiva represents qualities that seem contradictory: destruction and rebirth. In Sanskrit, Shiva means "favorable one."

1 Shiva is the Hindu god of destruction and renewal.

© L.L. Nou / Sipa Icono

Shiva has been represented in different ways by different artists.

Shiva is one of the most important gods of the Hindu religion. According to Hindu myth, Shiva lived on Mount Kailasa in the Himalayas with his female consort, or spouse—who appears in different stories as Kali, Durga, Parvati, Sati, Uma, or Shakti—and their two sons, Skanda and Ganesha.

Shiva in Art

In painting or sculpture, Shiva is usually depicted with white or pale gray skin. His coiled hair is decorated with a crescent moon and the Ganges River, which he is believed to have brought to Earth. Around his neck are a serpent and a necklace of skulls.

With his third eye, Shiva can give others the power of inward vision. Yet he can also cause destruction by focusing it outward.

In his hands Shiva carries a deerskin, a three-pronged spear, a small drum, or a club with a skull on top.

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Who is the Norse god of thunder?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Odin
2. Thor
3. Balder

Illustration: Gary Fields

©1996 Nintendo

Thor

Thor's name comes from the Germanic word for thunder. The eldest son of Odin, ruler of the gods, and Jord, the Earth goddess, Thor is one of the most important gods in Norse mythology.

2 Thor is the Norse god of thunder.

© Edmédia

Thor's magic hammer, Mjollnir, returned to Thor like a boomerang after he threw it.

Thor is the main war god in Norse mythology. He is second in importance only to his father, Odin. Thor was worshipped more than any other god by people in Iceland and most northern European countries. The weekday Thursday is named in honor of Thor.

Thor in Legend

Usually represented as a middle-aged man with enormous strength, Thor had a magic hammer, called Mjollnir, which symbolized lightning. Thor used Mjollnir to fight against his enemies. He wore a belt that doubled his strength and iron gloves that improved his throw. Thor's chariot made the sound of thunder as it approached.

Thor protected the Aesir, or chief gods, from giants and was kind toward humans. One of Thor's main enemies besides the giants was the serpent Jörmungand.

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What is monotheism?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Belief in one God
2. Worship of many gods
3. Hindu funeral rite

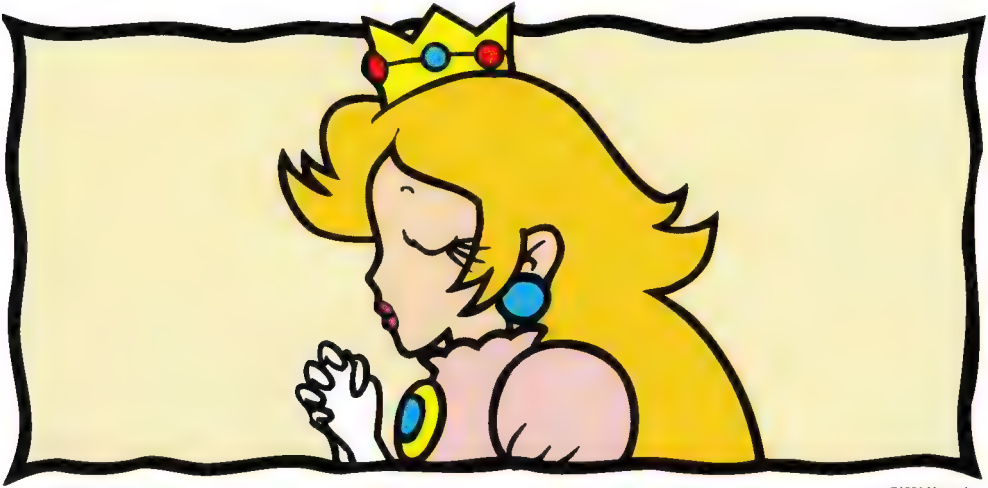


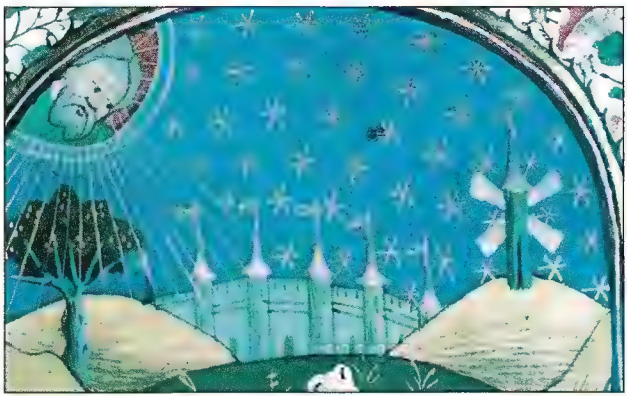
Illustration Gary Fields

©1996 Nintendo

Monotheism

The God of monotheistic religions is seen as the sole creator of the natural world and the highest judge of what is good and evil, wrong and right. God is also believed to be omniscient, or all-knowing, and omnipotent, or all-powerful.

1 Monotheism is the belief in one God.



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Although there are significant differences among Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, followers of these three religions all believe in one God.

The ancient Greeks and Romans were polytheistic. They believed in many gods who were associated with three domains, sky, Earth, and sea. Many centuries ago, Scandinavians believed in numerous Norse gods, including Odin, the king of the gods, and his son Thor. Today, followers of Hinduism also believe in a number of different gods, including Vishnu, the preserver of creation, and Shiva, the god of destruction and salvation.

One God

Monotheistic religious leaders of different faiths view God as an indescribable being, to be accepted as a mystery that people can never fully understand. Many religious leaders believe that a limited understanding of God is possible, through prayer and study.

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What is a pilgrimage?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Vacation in an unexplored land
2. Trip to a sacred site for religious purposes
3. Ceremony performed to heal the sick

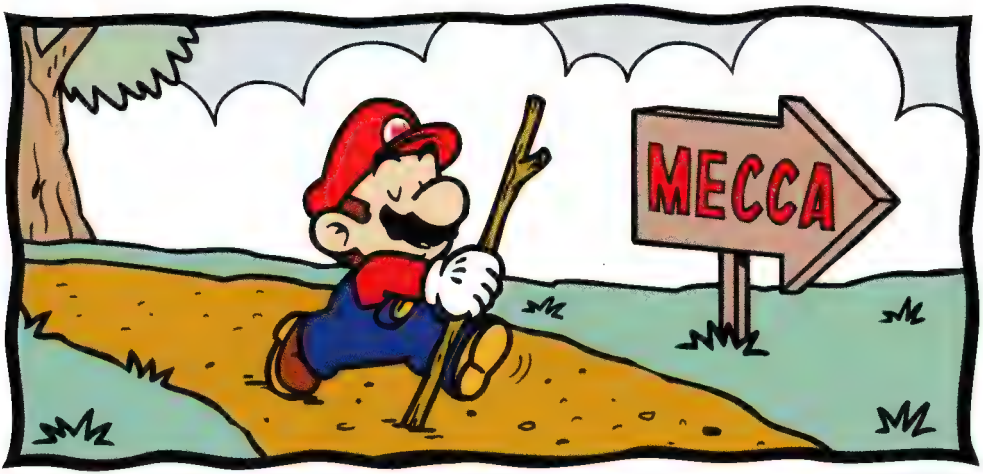

Illustration Gary Fields

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Pilgrimage

The site of a pilgrimage is usually determined by religious events. Muslims travel to Mecca, where Mohammed, the founder of Islam, was born. Buddhists make pilgrimages to Varanasi, India, and to Kandy, Sri Lanka, to visit a temple where one of Buddha's teeth is said to be stored.

2 A pilgrimage is a trip to a sacred site for religious purposes.

© Edimédia

The Middle Ages were a time of intense religious faith. Many pilgrimages were made to the Holy Land, or Palestine. Above, pilgrims pray in front of Mont-Saint-Michel cathedral in France.

In medieval times, Christian pilgrims began their journeys with a blessing from a high priest. On their way to a holy site, they stayed in hotels established especially for pilgrims. When they returned, pilgrims wore badges on their hats from the site they had visited.

Medieval Christian pilgrims most commonly visited Jerusalem; Rome; Santiago de Compostela, in Spain; and saints' graves located throughout Europe.

Pilgrims Today

People still go on pilgrimages today. Muslims are required to make at least one trip during their lifetime to Mecca. Popular sites for Catholic pilgrims include Lourdes, in France, and Turin, in Italy.

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What is a prophet?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. A person who speaks on behalf of God
2. A stockbroker
3. A doctor who treats foot diseases

Illustration Gary Fields

©1996 Nintendo

Prophet

Prophets were real people who were believed to speak for God on Earth.

1 **A prophet is a person who is believed to be a messenger or spokesperson for God.**

© J. L'Hoir / Edmedia

It is believed that God speaks directly to prophets. This painting depicts God speaking to Moses and instructing him to lead the children of Israel out of slavery in Egypt.

Prophets watched how people lived, how they worshiped, and how they treated each other. And they worried when people became cruel, greedy or uncharitable. Then they thought hard about the problem and how to correct it. They concentrated, and meditated, and prayed for guidance. Eventually, they were rewarded with an answer—a revelation—which they believed came directly from God.

Great Prophets

Christians believe that Jesus was the ultimate prophet who spoke directly to God, and communicated the word of God on Earth. But the Bible tells of other prophets who lived long before Jesus.

Moses is a prophet of the Old Testament. He delivered the Ten Commandments from God to the people of Israel. Elijah, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel also are Old Testament prophets. The great prophet of Islam is Mohammed, who was sent by the Muslim god Allah to preach on Earth.

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What is a bar mitzvah?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. A Jewish religious ceremony
2. A type of African tribal mask
3. A Muslim ritual bath

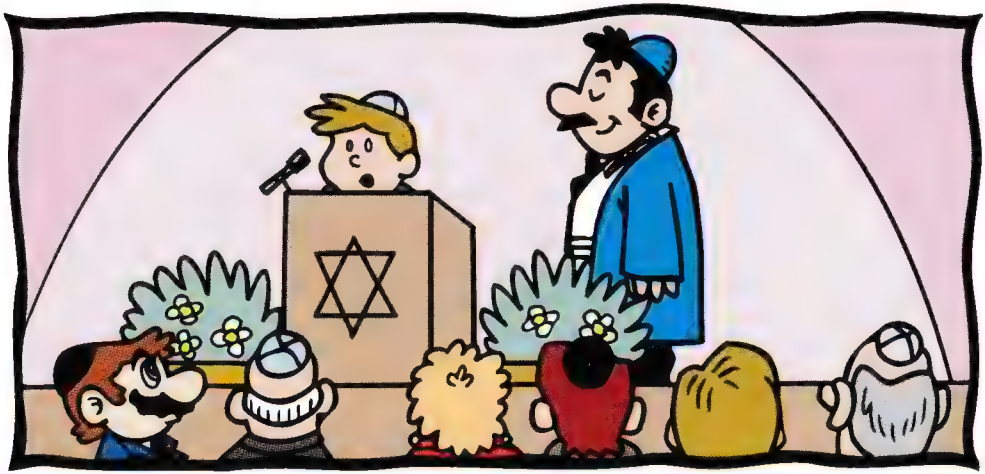

Illustration: Gary Fields

©1996 Nintendo

Bar Mitzvah

In Hebrew, the words bar mitzvah mean "one who is commanded."

1 A bar mitzvah is a Jewish ceremony that marks a boy's passage to manhood.

© Nathan Olshin

This young man has just completed reading his barmitzvah haftarah, a portion from the Old Testament.

When a Jewish boy turns thirteen, he celebrates his bar mitzvah. This religious ceremony celebrates the boy's maturity from childhood to manhood. The highlight of the service is when the boy is called before the congregation to read from the Torah, or holy scripture. Traditionally, only adults may read from the Torah. When the boy is called to read, it symbolizes the fact that he is considered an adult.

Bat Mitzvah for Girls

In highly traditional, or Orthodox, sects, only boys celebrate a bar mitzvah. But Conservative and Reformed congregations have a similar ceremony, called a bat mitzvah, for girls. After the bar or bat mitzvah service, family and friends hold a party in honor of the event. Once boys and girls have celebrated a bar or bat mitzvah they are expected to observe all the laws and customs of the Jewish religion.

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What is a kiva?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. An American Indian ceremonial place
2. A Mexican casserole
3. A Russian musical instrument

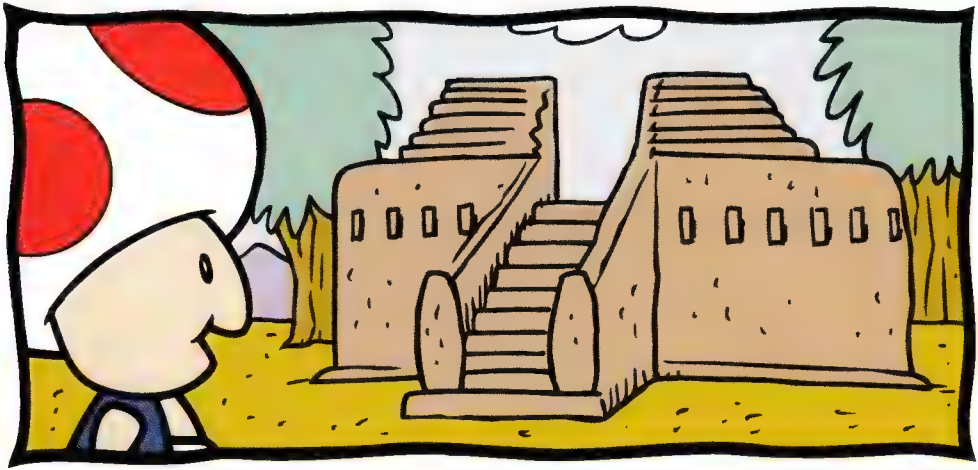

Illustration Gary Fields

©1996 Nintendo

Kiva

These ceremonial chambers were first built by the ancient Anasazi Indians of the American southwest thousands of years ago.

1 A kiva is an underground room used for some American Indian ceremonies.

© National Park Service

The Anasazi built subterranean ceremonial chambers called kivas. This one is located in the Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado.

The Anasazi were native people of the American southwest. Their descendants are members of Hopi and Pueblo communities in Arizona and New Mexico.

Symbol of Creation

These tribes believe the human race sprung from the world beneath Mother Earth. Kivas, which usually are built underground, symbolize the womb from which humans were born. At the kiva's center is a hole in the ground called a *sipapu*. This symbolizes the path humans took from the underworld to Earth.

A Meeting Place

Traditionally, only men were allowed to enter a kiva; climbing down into the round chamber through a hole in the roof. Inside, they performed religious ceremonies. They also used kivas as meeting places to discuss tribal business.

Although the invasion of Spanish explorers in the 16th century forced Indians to close their kivas, eventually they were reopened. Some are used in Hopi and Pueblo villages today.

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Why do people make masks?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. So enemies won't recognize them
2. To cover up bad complexions
3. As part of religious or cultural ceremonies

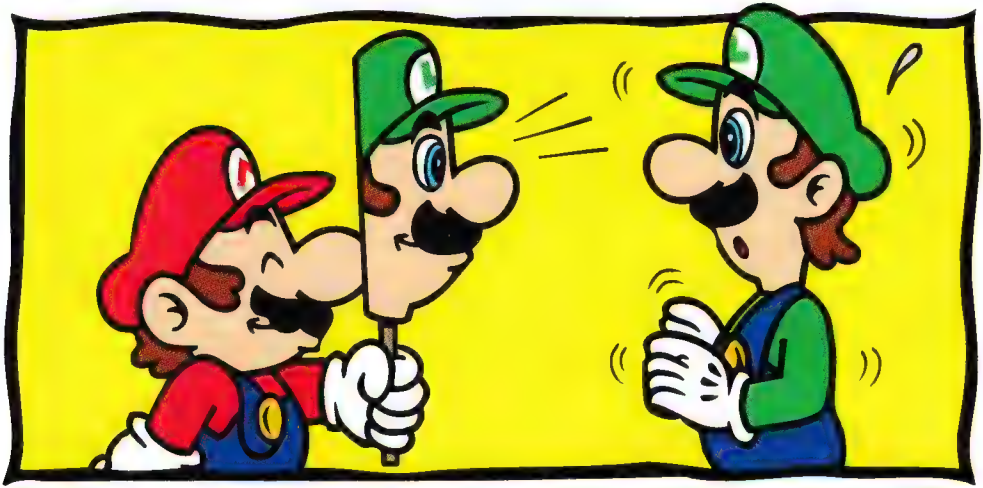

Illustration: Gary Fields

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Masks

Masks may represent ancestors, gods, or spirits. They are part of religious and tribal ceremonies in some cultures.

3 Masks traditionally are made to be used in religious or cultural ceremonies.

© Audet / Sunset

This is a tribal mask from Papua New Guinea.

Mask-makers use all sorts of materials to make masks—wood, reeds, feathers, leaves, clay or papier-mâché. Ancient Greeks made death masks from gold pressed over a dead person's face to preserve his image for posterity.

Symbolism

Masks used in tribal ceremonies often represent a particular character, such as a god or spirit, which the people easily recognize. The image may be called upon to protect the tribe, to frighten enemies, or to bring good luck, a plentiful harvest, or a spell of rain.

Theatrical Masks

Sometimes masks are used in plays or storytelling. In ancient Greece, actors wore masks. Since one actor often played several roles in a production, masks allowed him to switch characters easily. In the Japanese form of drama called No actors wear masks. Italian comedies of the 16th to 18th centuries usually featured stock characters, such as Harlequin, who always appeared in masks.

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What is a monastery?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. A country ruled by a king
2. A garment worn by Sikhs
3. A religious community

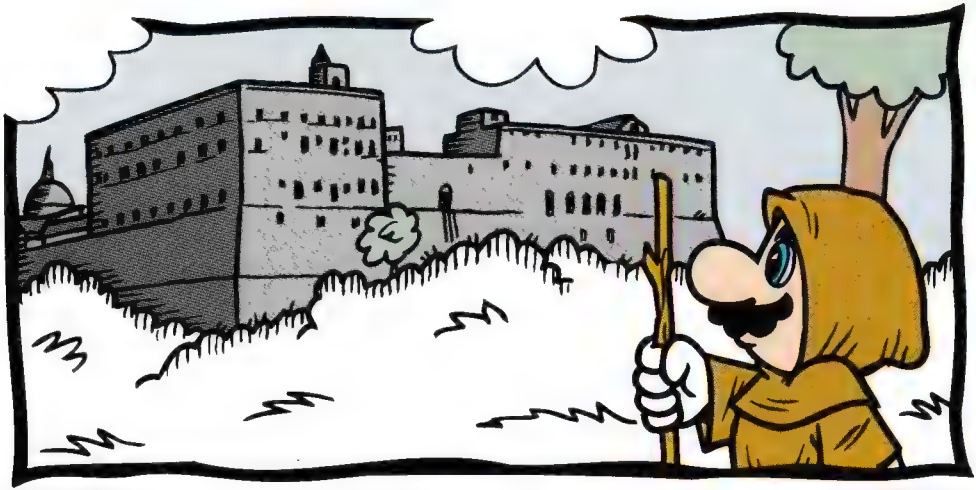

Illustration: Gary Fields

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Monastery

Monasteries provide monks and nuns with solitude for contemplation and prayer.

3 A monastery is a private community of monks or nuns.

© Len Sirman

This is a Tibetan Buddhist monastery. Monasteries are usually built in remote areas, far from the distractions and congestion of big cities.

Male monks and female nuns devote their lives to prayer. Some live in monasteries—closed communities with a peaceful environment for prayer and study. Men and women rarely live in monasteries together.

Monastic Life

Life in a monastery is simple. Residents wear plain robes, called habits, eat basic meals, and pray together several times a day. The rest of the time is used for meditation and work, such as gardening. Most of the day is spent in silence.

In the U.S. and Europe, most Catholic monasteries belong to the Benedictine order founded by St. Benedict in the 6th century. Monasteries are also part of Buddhist religious life.

Trouble in Paradise

Throughout history monasteries have been targets of those who wanted to destroy religious culture. Henry VIII dissolved England's monasteries in the Middle Ages. In the 20th-century, Chinese conquerors destroyed Tibet's Buddhist monasteries.

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Which Christian holiday is determined by the lunar calendar?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1 All Saints Day

2 Christmas

3 Easter

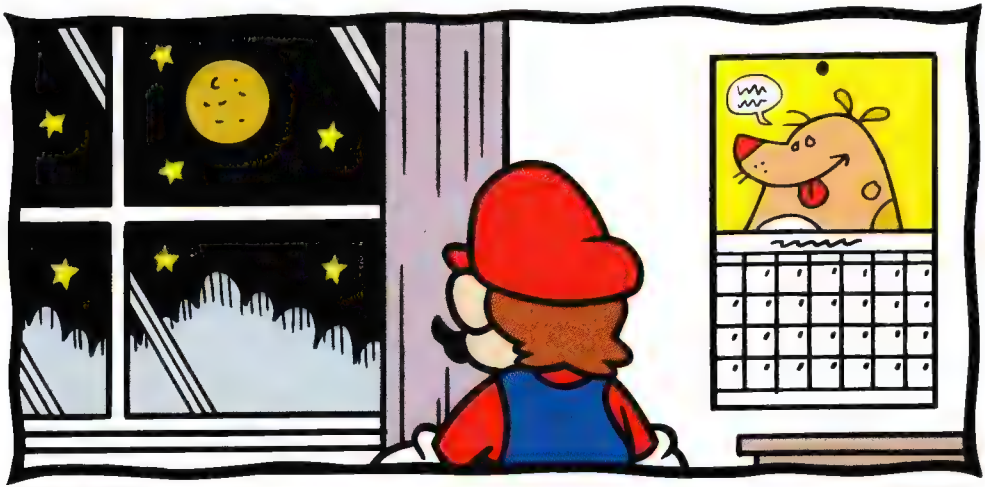

Illustration: Gary Fields

©1996 Nintendo

Easter

Easter, the Christian holiday that commemorates the resurrection of Jesus, falls on the first Sunday on or after the first full moon of spring. It can occur any time between March 22 and April 25.

3 The date of Easter is determined by the lunar calendar.

© B. Pengois / Optron Photo

At Easter, it's customary to wear new clothes to celebrate the fresh start of spring. Easter eggs and Easter bunnies come from ancient pagan rituals to celebrate the coming of spring.

Most Christians celebrate Easter with special holiday church services. Many other Easter holiday traditions actually come from ancient pagan spring celebrations. In fact, the name Easter comes from the ancient Norse goddess of spring, Ostara.

Celebration of Spring

Spring has always been a time for celebration—as the warmth of the Sun grows stronger, flowers bloom, and new crops are planted. Easter customs such as hunting for eggs and receiving visits from the Easter bunny developed from ancient rituals to celebrate fertility and life. Eggs, symbols of life, celebrated the renewal of life in spring. Later, people colored the eggs to represent spring flowers. Rabbits, which reproduce frequently and in great numbers, were symbols of fertility.

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Who were the Amazons?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. South American Indian holy men
2. Islamic pilgrims to the holy city of Mecca
3. Mythical women warriors

Illustration: Gary Fields

©1996 Nintendo

Amazons

The mythical tribe of women warriors known as the Amazons, is a part of Greek mythology. They were believed to be descended from Ares, the god of war, and Artemis, the goddess of hunting.

3 The Amazons were mythical women warriors.

© Ciret

Mythical female warriors, called Amazons, were depicted in the mosaics of ancient Greece.

Besides being brave warriors, Amazons were also expert hunters. This made them unique, because fighting battles and hunting were usually done by men. Though they used all sorts of weapons, Amazons were best known for their skill with bows and arrows.

Other Women Warriors

There are tales of women warriors in the mythology of other cultures, too. In ancient India tales were told of a warlike princess who killed men. Eskimo legends include the story of a great female huntress with superhuman strength. Indians in Brazil also tell tales of a mysterious tribe of female warriors.

Naming the River

The Amazon River in South America is the world's second-longest river. Explorers named it the Amazon because they were met there by tribes of Indians with long hair who carried bows and arrows.

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What was El Dorado?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. A mythical city of gold
2. Home of the gods in Norse mythology
3. The three-headed dog god of ancient Greece

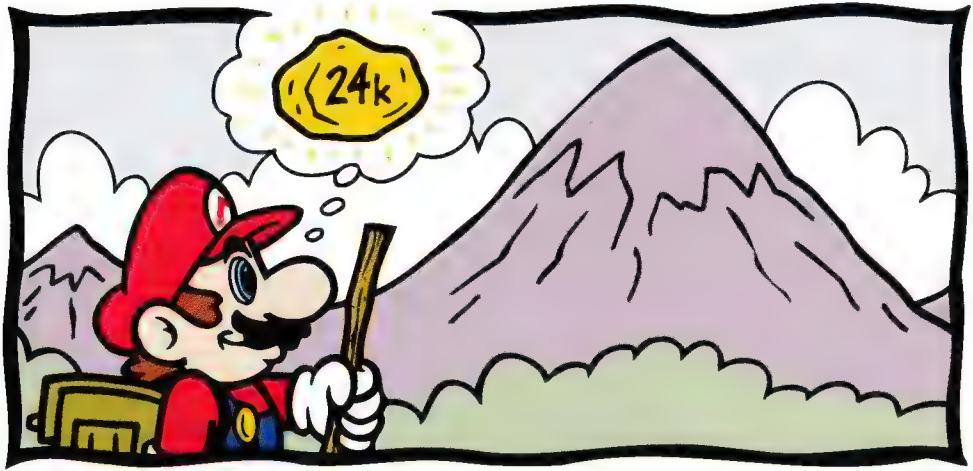

Illustration: Gary Fields

©1996 Nintendo

El Dorado

There wasn't really a city of gold in South America, but that didn't stop Spanish conquerors from searching for it.

1 El Dorado was a mythical city of gold.

© Fred Kohler / DIAF

Throughout history, conquerors and adventurers traveled to South America in search of El Dorado, the mythical city of gold. Maybe some people still do!

In Spanish, El Dorado means "the golden man." It refers to a ritual practiced by some South American Indian tribes in the 1500s. When a tribe received a new leader they held a ceremony to celebrate his rise to power. For the occasion, the new ruler covered his body with a sticky plant resin and his attendants dusted his skin with powdered gold. Gold was sacred to the Indians. They thought it symbolized the power of the sun.

A Likely Story

Spanish conquerors in South America in the 1500s were greedy for land and wealth. A few of them witnessed this Indian coronation ceremony and they were amazed. They figured that a king who covered his body with gold dust must rule over the wealthiest kingdom on Earth—a kingdom of gold. That's how the myth of El Dorado, the city of gold, began.

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In which city was Jesus born?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Bethlehem
2. Jerusalem
3. Nazareth

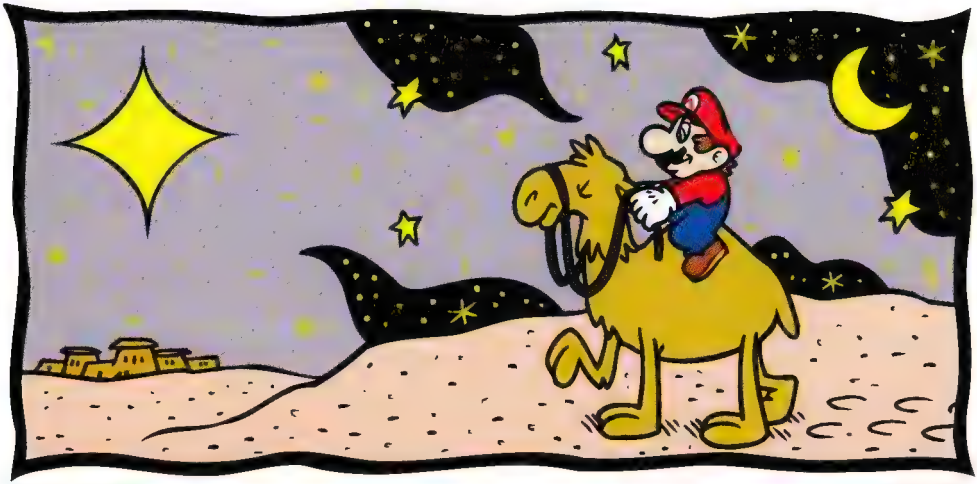


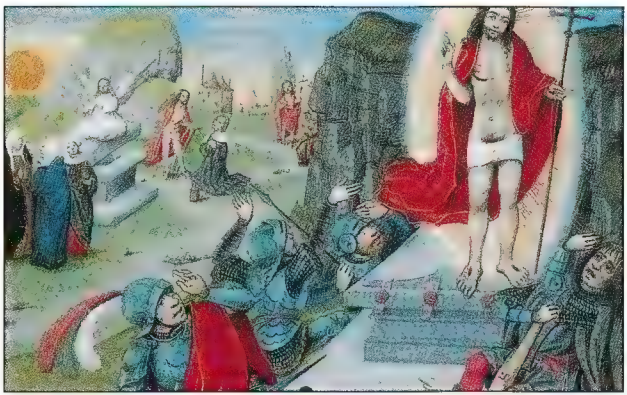
Illustration Gary Fields

©1996 Nintendo

Jesus

Jesus Christ is the chief prophet and Messiah of the Christian faith. Jesus is also an important prophet to Muslims.

1 Jesus was born in Bethlehem.



© J.-L. Charmet / Explorer

This painting from the Middle Ages depicts the events leading up to the resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a city near Jerusalem. His family came from Nazareth, and shortly after his birth they returned there. When Jesus was in his twenties, he met John the Baptist, a preacher and prophet. Jesus became a devoted follower. When John was executed by the government, Jesus took up his ministry.

Man of Miracles

Jesus was a talented and popular preacher. He was kind, compassionate, clever, and skilled at debate. Many stories are told of the miracles Jesus performed. His followers came to believe he was the Savior, or Messiah, sent by God to Earth. But his popularity angered the government, which had him executed. Several days after his death, his followers claimed they had seen him alive. Reports of his resurrection confirmed the Christians' belief that Jesus was the Messiah.

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Which religion is based on the teachings of Lao-Tzu?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Bahaism
2. Taoism
3. Zoroastrianism

Illustration: Gary Fields

©1991 Nintendo

Taoism

The religion of Taoism, which has existed in China since the third century BC, was made illegal when China became a communist nation in 1949.

2 Taoism is based on the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Lao-Tzu.

© G. Tompkinson / Cosmos

When communists took over China, many Chinese Taoists fled to Taiwan, a large island near China. In Taiwan, Taoists and members of other religious groups, such as Buddhists, could practice their religions freely. This Taiwanese Taoist is dressed for a festival.

Taoism is based on the writings of Chinese philosopher Lao-Tzu in a book called the *Tao Te Ching*. The title means "The Book of the Way and Its Power." *Tao* is the Chinese word for "the way." Some people aren't sure whether Lao-Tzu really existed, but there's little doubt that the *Tao Te Ching* was written in the fourth century BC.

Religion Without Gods

Taoists don't worship gods. Instead, Taoism gives its followers a code of thought and behavior that they strive to follow. The code can be puzzling. One philosophy states: "To speak of the Tao is to not speak of it at all." Taoists may spend a lifetime pondering this idea. Basically, Taoists believe more is achieved by passive action than by vigorous activity. "Look at water," a Taoist might say, "it's soft and yielding, but it can wear away even the hardest stone."

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Where does the Procession of the Buddha's Tooth take place?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Los Angeles, California
2. Capetown, South Africa
3. Kandy, Sri Lanka

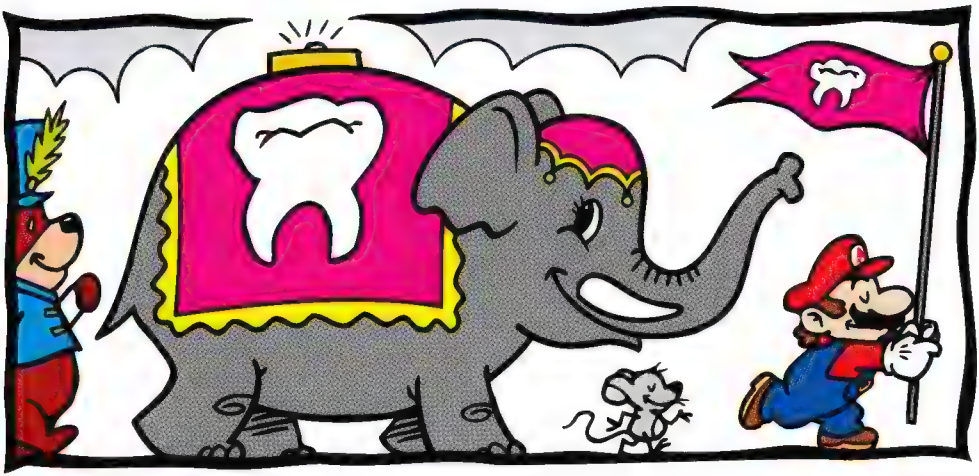

Illustration: Gary Fields

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Buddhist Festivals

The founder of the Buddhist religion is the Buddha, a philosopher and holy man who lived in India centuries ago.

3 The Procession of the Buddha's Tooth takes place in Kandy, Sri Lanka.

© Foto Features / Sunset

The Procession of the Buddha's Tooth is held each year in the city of Kandy, Sri Lanka. The relic is carried by an elephant which leads a parade through the city.

After the Buddha died, his personal belongings and relics taken from his body were distributed to places in and around India. Since that time, the relics, such as locks of the Buddha's hair and pieces of his robe, have been moved to various shrines in Asia. The Buddha's tooth eventually went to the island of Sri Lanka, south of India. It's kept in an elaborate box that's housed in the Buddhist temple, Dalada Maligava, in the city of Kandy. During the year devout Buddhists make pilgrimages, or visits of prayer and respect, to the site of this holy relic.

Annual Celebration

Since the fourth century, the Buddha's tooth has been the center of a lavish twelve-day celebration held in Sri Lanka each July. The Procession of the Buddha's Tooth, or Asalha Perahera, is a parade of 500 men and elephants in elaborate costumes. The largest elephant leads the procession and carries the Buddha's tooth on its back.

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Which civilization built pyramid-shaped temples?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1 Arawak

2 Maya

3 Polynesian

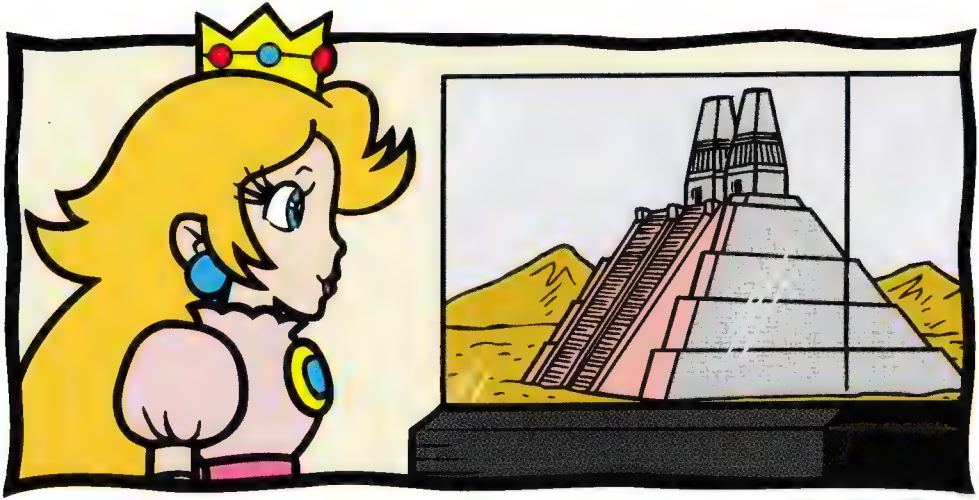

Illustration Gary Fields

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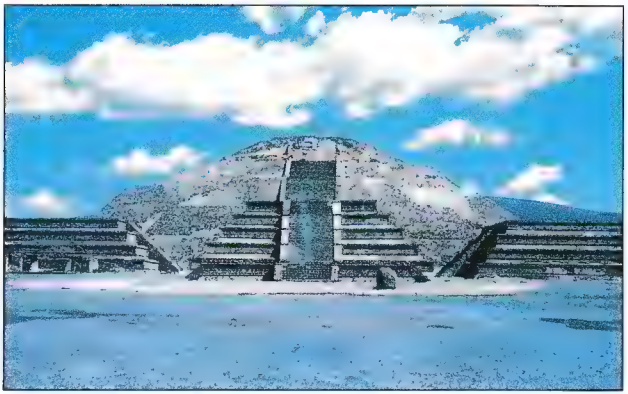
Pyramids

We usually associate pyramids with ancient Egypt, but there also are ancient pyramid-shaped temples in Central America. These pyramids were built by Mayas, Aztecs, and Toltecs.

2 The Maya civilization built pyramids.



© Len Sirman

Central American pyramids are flat on top and they have steps leading up their sides. Some Central American pyramids have altars located on the platforms leading up to the top. This is where sacrifices and offerings to the gods were made.

Pyramids of Central America, which still stand in Guatemala and Mexico, are different from pyramids of Egypt. Central American pyramids are flat on top; Egyptian pyramids are pointed. Central American pyramids have steps on the gently sloping outer walls so people could climb them. Egyptian pyramids have smooth, steeply sloped walls. There's also a huge time difference between construction of the Egyptian pyramids—more than 2,000 years BC—and the building of the Central American pyramids—about 300 to 900 AD.

Tombs and Temples

The pyramids also were used for different purposes. Egyptian pyramids were tombs for kings, called pharaohs, and their families. Maya, Aztec, and Toltec pyramids were temples where they made sacrifices (sometimes human sacrifices!) to their gods.

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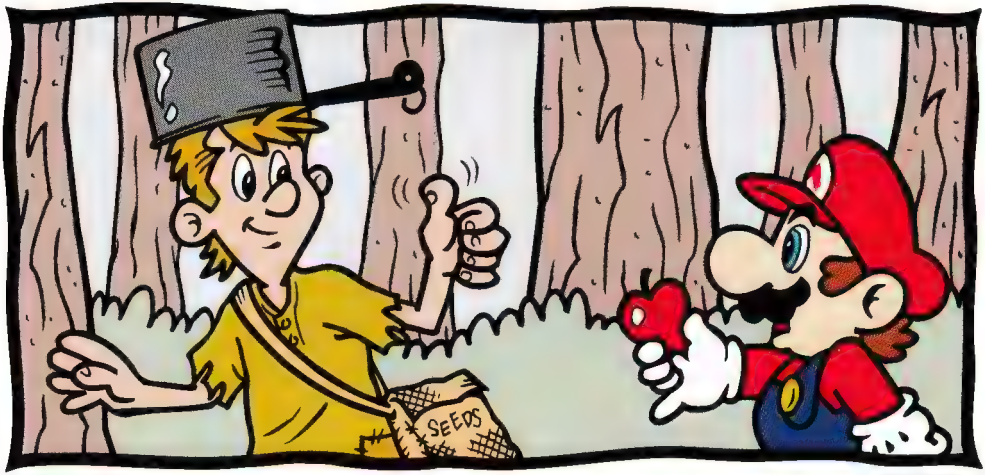
What is a legend?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. An altar in a Shinto shrine
2. A folk tale inspired by real events
3. A Muslim prayer rug



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Legends

Johnny Appleseed is the subject of many American legends. Stories of the man who traveled around the United States planting apple seeds have been told for generations.

2 A legend is a folk tale inspired by real events.

© Edmedia

Story-telling was a favorite form of entertainment for people in days gone by. Even people who couldn't read and write could share stories verbally. Over time, some stories based on real events have evolved into legends.

Johnny Appleseed was a real person. His name was John Chapman and he was born in Massachusetts in 1774. He collected apple seeds and he traveled around the Ohio Valley planting them and caring for the trees. So you can see that the legend of Johnny Appleseed is based on facts. Over time, however, aspects of the story—such as the number of trees he planted or the area he covered—have been exaggerated. This is how a true story evolves into a legend.

Story Tellers

Long before most American legends were written down they were passed along verbally by story tellers. To make the stories more entertaining and fantastic, story tellers often embellished the details. Highly exaggerated legends, which contain events that could never happen in real life, such as the tale of the giant woodsman Paul Bunyan, are known as tall tales.

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What is astrology?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Belief that people can live on stars
2. Predicting human events based on the position of the stars

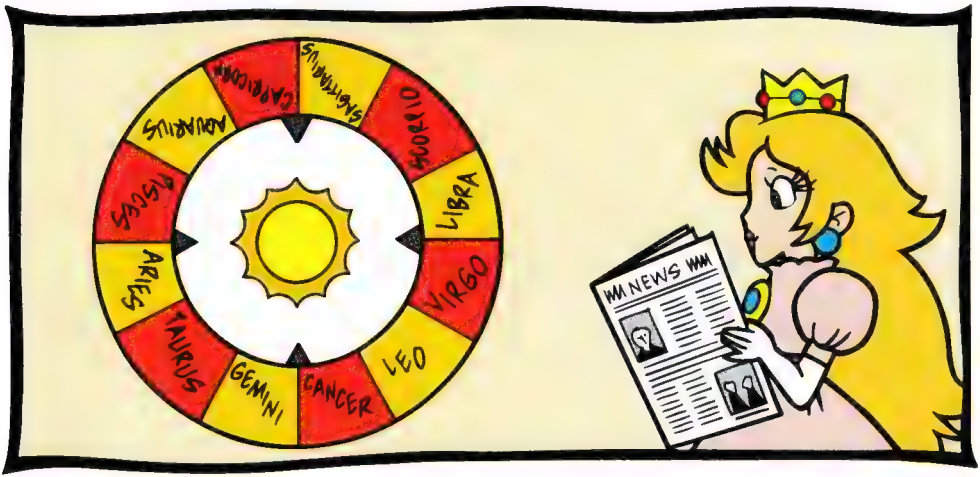

Illustration: Gary Fields

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Astrology

Astrologers believe your personality and your future can be influenced by the position of the sun, planets, and stars on the day you were born.

3 Astrology involves predicting human events based on the position of the stars.

© Lauros Giraudon

From ancient times, through the Middle Ages and to the present day, some of the world's great leaders have employed astrologers to provide them with guidance and to predict their futures.

Do you know your zodiac sign? There are twelve astrological or zodiac signs, named for twelve constellations of stars in the sky. Your sign is determined by the position of the sun in relation to the constellations on your birthdate. People who study astrology think that each sign of the zodiac possesses certain traits, and that people who share a zodiac sign share these characteristics. They also believe the position of the planets on your birthdate determines your fate.

Celestial Guidance

Astrology has existed since the time of the ancient Babylonians, about 1600 BC. Babylonians from the region of Chaldea were such devoted astrologers that all astrologers were once called Chaldeans.

Ancient Egyptian and Roman rulers employed astrologers. Even today, world leaders have been known to consult astrologers for guidance.

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What is a temple?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. A school for religious training
2. A sanctuary devoted to a god or sacred image
3. A building for public prayer services

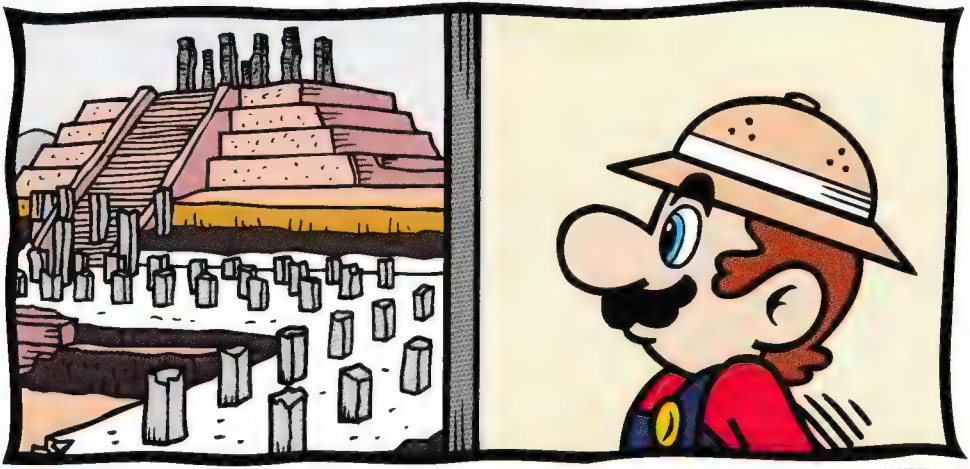

Illustration: Gary Fields

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Temples

Unlike churches, synagogues, and mosques, where any person may go to attend religious services, a temple traditionally is a sacred building that ordinary people may not enter.

2 A temple is a sanctuary devoted to a god or sacred image.

© J.-M. Adamini / Gamma

Temples are sacred shrines considered to be the homes of gods or divine beings.

Temples are among the most ancient of all religious buildings. Ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Aztecs, and Hindus all built temples in honor of their gods or deities. In fact, a temple was considered to be the home of the god or sacred being. In some cultures, temples are still constructed and maintained to honor the gods.

Sacred Buildings

Inside the temple were shrines, or altars, where prayers and offerings were made to individual gods. Sometimes, ordinary citizens were allowed to enter the outer chambers of the temple. Usually, however, only priests could enter the temple; and they were the only ones allowed into the inner chamber where a likeness of the god was kept. The priests' duties sometimes included bathing or cleaning the statue, dressing it, or decorating the altar that surrounded it.

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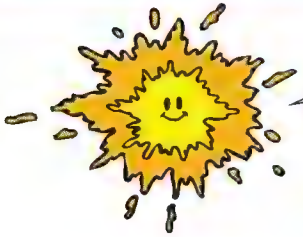
Which is a person who seeks to convert others to a faith?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS



1 Missionary

2 Muezzin

3 Samaritan

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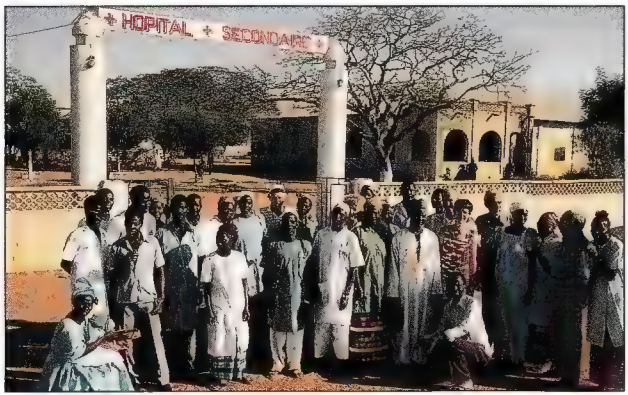
Missionaries

Think of a missionary as a person on a "mission." That mission is to convert other people to his or her faith, or religion.

1 A missionary seeks to convert others to a faith.



© Tainturier / Jerrican

In undeveloped nations, Christian missionaries build churches to preach the word of their religion. They also build schools and hospitals to help the communities where they settle.

Members of some faiths are commanded to preach and recruit new members to the faith. They do this by informing non-believers about the basis of their faith. Since it is assumed that a nonbeliever would have no other way of knowing this information, the missionary becomes the key component for spreading the word.

Spread the Word

In the United States, we're most familiar with Christian missionaries. Very often, these people travel to underdeveloped nations in South America and Africa seeking to make religious converts. In addition to building churches and preaching, missionaries may also set up schools, medical clinics, and even hospitals to serve the communities they visit.

Other religions have missionaries as well. Both Islam and Buddhism command believers to spread the word of their faith to nonbelievers.

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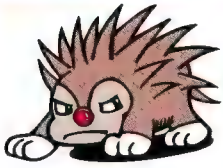
What is theology?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS



1. The study of church architecture
2. The study of the Bible
3. The study of religion

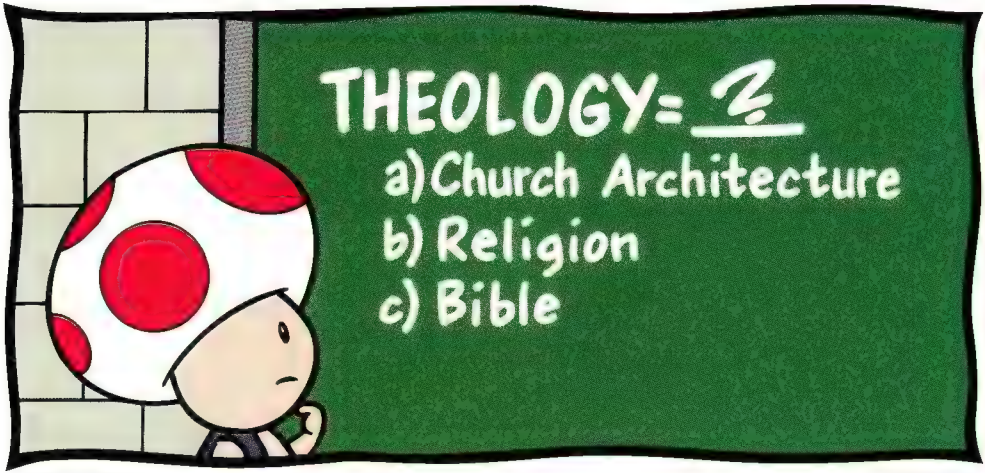


Illustration: Gary Fields

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3 Theology is the study of religion.

Theology

The word theology comes from the Greek word *theos*, which means "god." The study of theology is the study of gods and religion.

© W. Peter / Explorer

The study of theology is often directly opposed to the study of science. When the astronomer Galileo had to defend his theory of a sun-centered universe to a committee of religious authorities, science and theology went head-to-head.

Theology generally refers to the study of Christian teaching about God, but it can refer to the study of any religion and its beliefs about gods and deities. In fact, the study of theology existed before Christianity existed. Ancient Greeks used the word "theology" to refer to the study of their many gods and goddesses.

What We Know

Much of the study of theology concerns what people know and believe about their God, and why they know or believe it. In general, people come to believe certain things about their gods simply by observing the world around them and using their common sense. This is known as natural theology. Other beliefs are formed by stories of a god's work in holy texts such as the Bible. This is known as revealed theology, because the belief is the result of the god revealing himself to humankind.

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What are chullpas?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Aymara tombs
2. Aztec gods
3. Mayan priests

AYMARA TOMBS
MAYAN PRIESTS
AZTEC GODS

Illustration, Gary Fields

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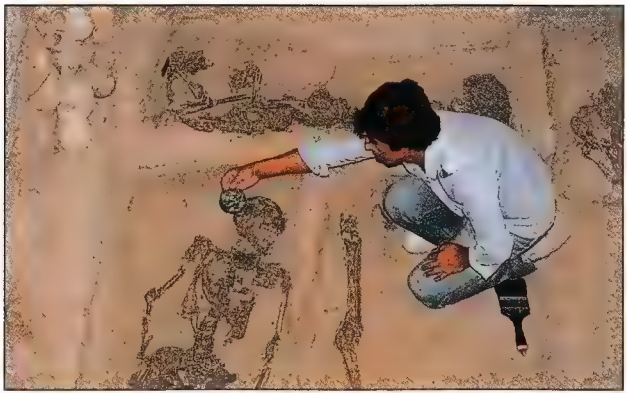
Chullpas

A society of Indians who spoke the Aymara language once lived in the Puno region of Peru, near Lake Titicaca. Descendants of these people still live in Peru today.

1 Chullpas are tombs from Aymara civilizations.



© Kitty O'Donnel / Sipa Press

Stories about evil spirits that guarded the ancient tombs of Peru kept archaeologists and thieves away from the tombs for generations.

The Aymara Indians were conquered by the Incas in the 15th century; and the Incas were conquered by Spanish soldiers about 100 years later. Though the Incas were known for their highly developed architecture, the Aymara are said to have built even more complex and unusual structures. About all that remain are the chullpas.

Burial Towers

Chullpas are circular burial towers—some are are tall as 40 feet (12 m). There are several ruined chullpas in the town of Sillustani, in southern Peru. Some have fallen over time and others were never completed. The Aymara Indians, Incas, and other ancient cultures of Peru mummified the bodies of their kings, queens, and nobles. Offerings of food and drink were left for the mummies. On special occasions, the mummies were taken out and carried through the cities in parades.

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Which is a symbol of St. Patrick's Day?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Evergreen tree
2. Rose
3. Shamrock

Illustration Gary Fields

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St. Patrick's Day

The holiday of St. Patrick's Day is celebrated on March 17, the date of the saint's death.

3 The shamrock is a symbol of St. Patrick's Day.

© Superstock

The name shamrock has been given to several plants with leaves divided into three leaflets. Redwood sorrel, a species of wood sorrel, is shown here.

Saint Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland, though he was not born in Ireland. He was born at the end of the 4th century, probably in Wales. In fact, he arrived in Ireland as a slave, captured by Irish invaders. Several years later, he escaped and studied to become a priest. Eventually, he returned to Ireland as a bishop.

A Wise Teacher

Saint Patrick was known as a likable and engaging man who traveled around the country preaching and making converts to the Catholic church.

It is said that Saint Patrick used the three leaves of the shamrock to explain the concept of the Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—to nonbelievers. Each leaf was separate, yet joined together to make a common unit.

Some people doubt the truth of the story, but the shamrock remains a symbol of Saint Patrick and of Ireland.

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What is triskaidekaphobia?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS

1. Fear of number thirteen
2. Three-headed Inca god
3. Hindu spring festival

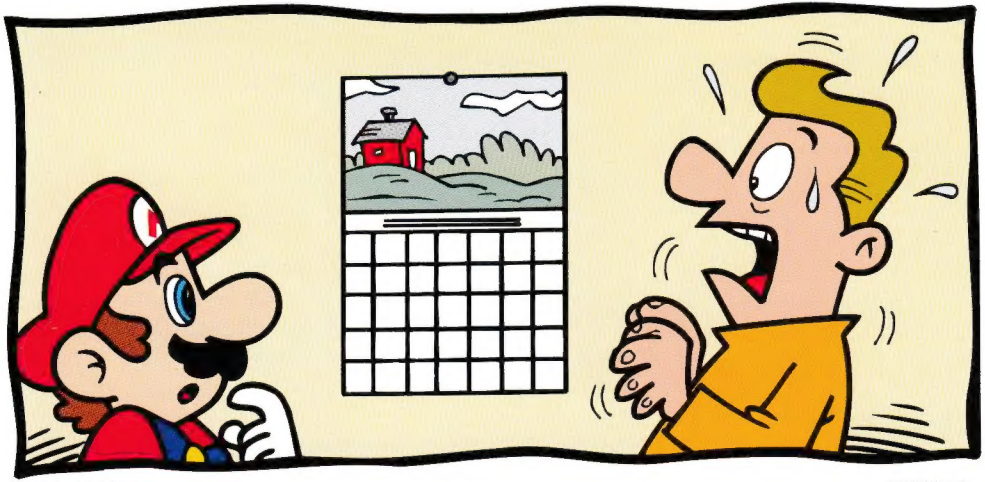

Illustration: Gary Fields

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1 Triskaidekaphobia is fear of number thirteen.

Triskaidekaphobia

A phobia is a fear of something that most people consider to be harmless. Some people have a pronounced fear of the number thirteen—they think it signifies bad luck.

© Superstock

Friday the 13th is regarded by superstitious people as a very unlucky day.

The belief that thirteen is unlucky can be traced to an ancient Norse myth. Twelve gods were having a banquet when Loki, the god of evil, crashed the party. In the scuffle to chase Loki away, Balder, the god of light, was killed. This led people to believe that thirteen guests at a table was unlucky indeed.

Christian Thought

A similar belief evolved in Christian thought. At the Last Supper, after which Jesus was betrayed to the Romans, there were thirteen guests—Jesus and the twelve apostles. Once again, thirteen guests at a table was unlucky.

American History

Yet, thirteen is not an unlucky number in American history. The great seal of the United States features an eagle holding thirteen spears and an olive branch with thirteen leaves, symbolizing the thirteen original colonies.

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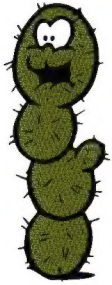
In which culture were cats considered sacred?

BELIEFS AND LEGENDS



1 Chinese
2 Egyptian
3 Norse

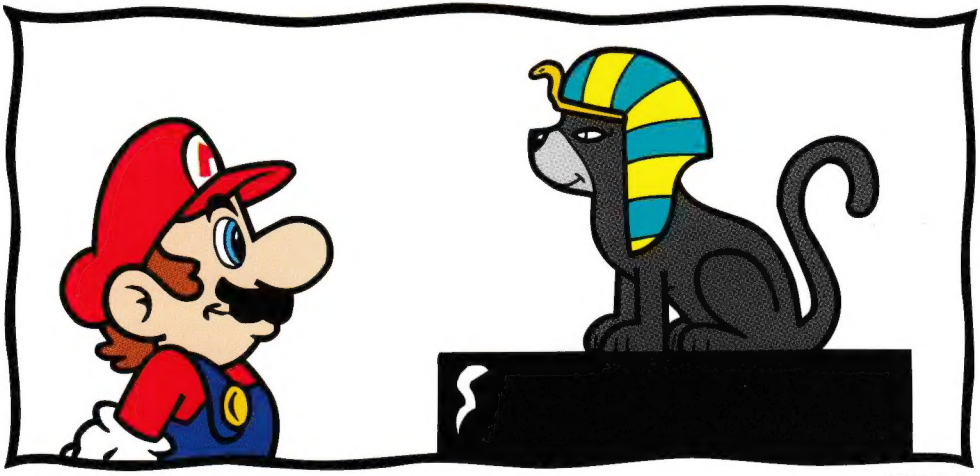


Illustration: Gary Fields

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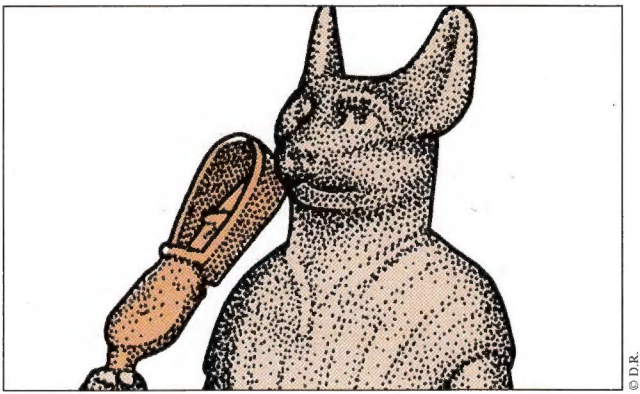
Sacred Cats

The Egyptian goddess Bast, also known as Bastet and Pasht, was depicted as a woman with a cat's head.

2 Egyptians considered cats sacred.



© D.R.

The Egyptian goddess Bast had a cat's head and a woman's body. She is usually shown carrying a rattle, called a sistrum.

The goddess Bast was the Egyptian goddess of joy, and she was associated with the sun and the sun god Ra. In some Egyptian mythology, Bast was said to be the daughter of Ra.

Bast was a kind goddess. This distinguished her from Sekhmet, a goddess with a lion's head, who was a war goddess.

Growth of a Goddess

At first, Bast was a minor goddess. She was worshiped only in the northeastern part of ancient Egypt, in cities on the Nile River Delta. The ancient city of Bubastis, or "House of Bast," was dedicated to her. When Bubastis became a major city, the worship of Bast spread to the rest of Egypt.

Cat Fancy

Naturally, cats were associated with Bast. Because the cat-headed goddess was sacred, cats were sacred as well. In ancient Bubastis there was an entire cemetery filled with mummified cats in honor of the goddess Bast.

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